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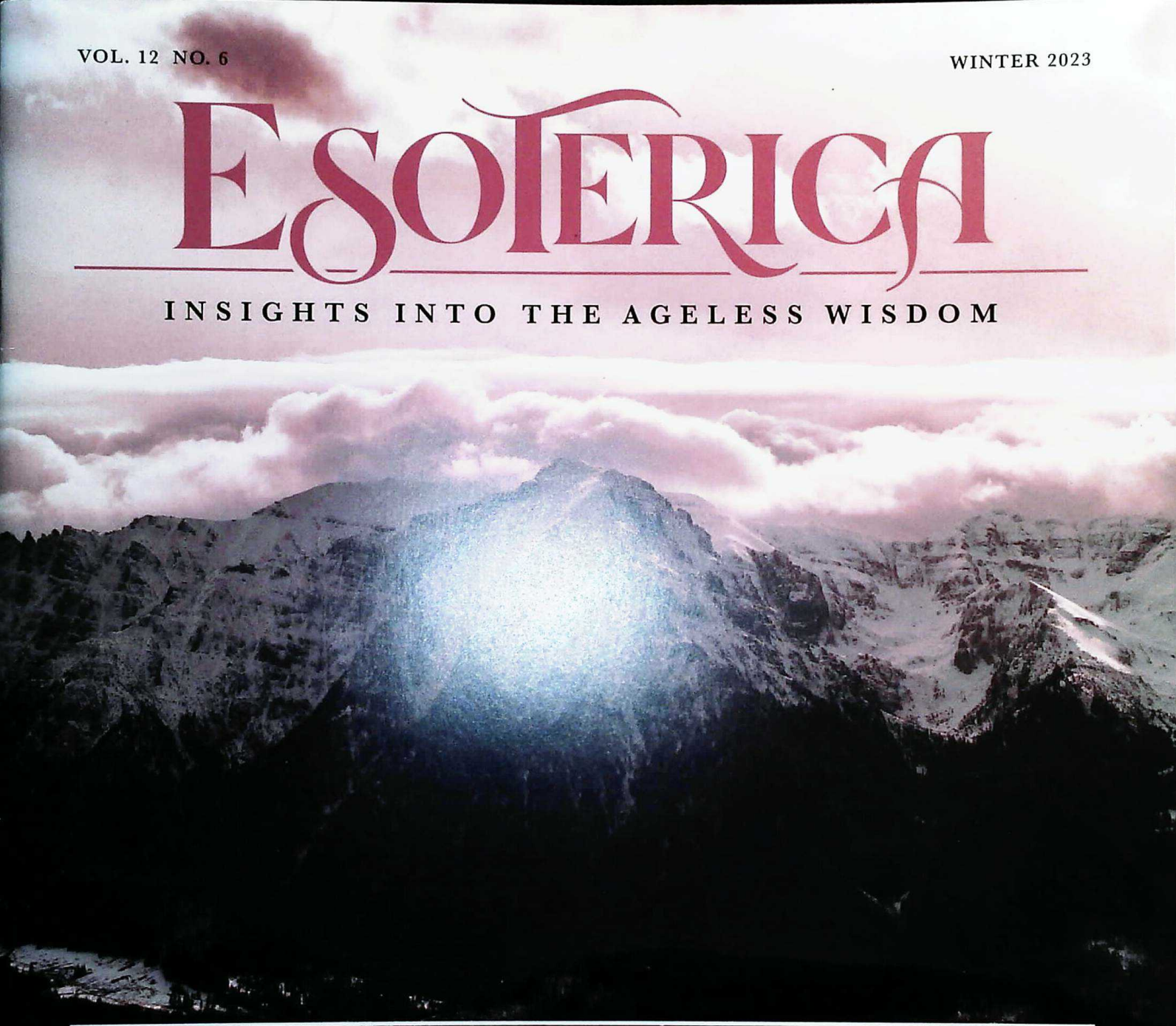
# ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM



*Contributors:* George M Young | Alan Senior | Ananya Sri Ram | Robert Kitto
Colyn Boyce | Joy Mills

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# *From the Editor's desk*

As we approach the end of another year, we can look forward to the so-called, return of the light. This is best known as a pagan expression referring to the increase in daylight starting immediately after the winter solstice. We will enjoy an extra ten minutes of daylight or so each week up until the spring equinox in March. Pagan and Druid teachings have much to compare with more [illegible] as HP Blavatsky pointed out in many references in *The Secret Doctrine*.

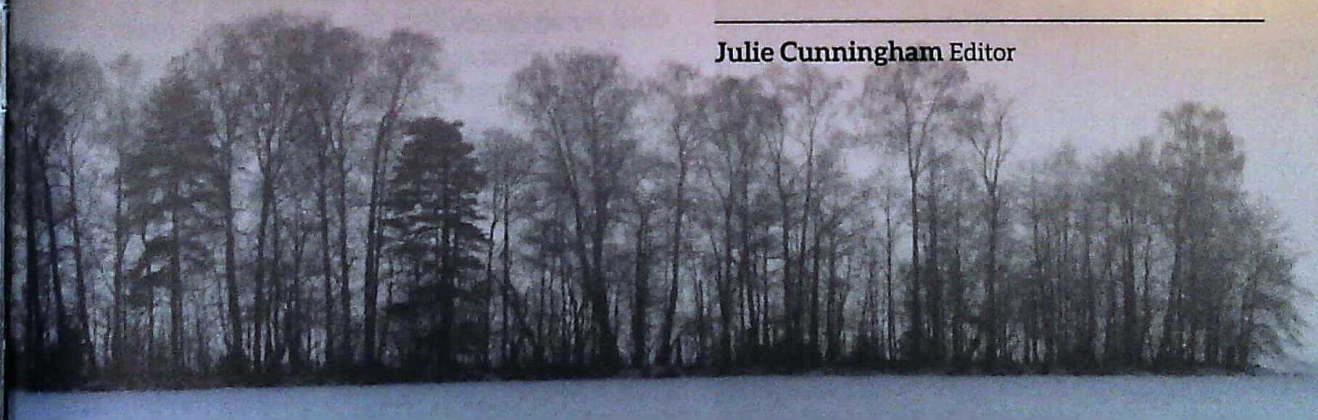
In this edition, we have a very [illegible] article from Colyn Boyce featuring Alfred Russel Wallace, an English naturalist, explorer, geographer, anthropologist, biologist, and illustrator. Wallace was also a member of the Theosophical Society. He was a contemporary of Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist credited with the theory of natural selection. Both scientists studied the evolution of life on Earth but where Darwin espoused the survival of the fittest as the motivating factor, Wallace added a spiritual element as the guiding force.

In a similar vein but within a more creative field, George M. Young writes about "*Walking the Path With William Wordsworth*" and the many elements of ancient wisdom found in his poems, especially from his experiences of nature. Two very opposite approaches to the study of nature yet both of them finding the spiritual in the everyday world.

Social media, especially various Facebook sites, have hosted an increasing debate about theosophy versus pseudo-theosophy. This has given rise to some confusion regarding what is true and what is false. HP Blavatsky warned about this in her article titled *On Pseudo-Theosophy*. She said that the world would soon be confused between the real and the false. The short piece – *Extracts from "The Theosophical Movement After H.P. Blavatsky"* gives a glimpse into the origins of this issue. It is hoped that interested readers will be encouraged to 'do the research' for themselves and avail themselves of the facts so as to come to an informed opinion.

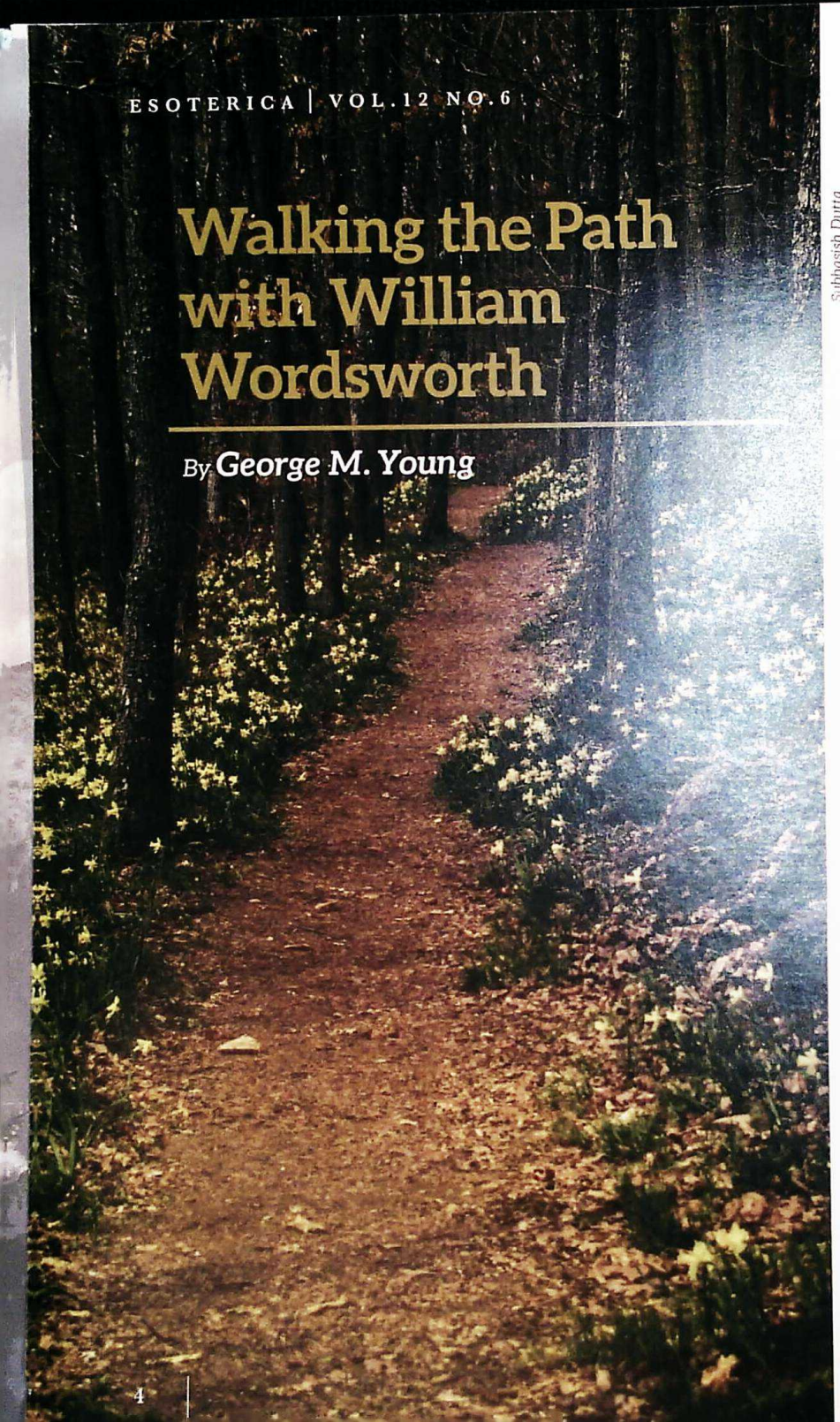
I wish you well in everything you do in the coming year. ✻

**Julie Cunningham** Editor



# Walking the Path with William Wordsworth

By George M. Young



Subhasish Dutta



The first time I read more than a few lines of Wordsworth, it was because I had to, for sophomore college English. I liked some of the short poems, the *Lucy* series, and some of the memorable lines and verses from the longer poems, but overall I thought he was pretty boring—after Shakespeare and Milton, a bit trite. Why did he deserve such a thick green book? All the way through *The Prelude*, I kept flipping to the end to see how many pages were left.

Now, forty years later, he is, for quiet, personal reading, my favourite English poet. And I am not the only one. C. S. Lewis wrote that he was not much impressed with Wordsworth as a young man, but came back to him after fifty years and was surprised by the joys he had been missing. Wordsworth is one of those masters who will wait for us until we are ready.

Born into comfortable but not particularly prominent circumstances in 1770 in the scenic Lake District in the north of England, the area now known as Wordsworth Country, he attended Cambridge University, took summer walking tours through the Alps, and in 1791 visited revolutionary France. He was caught up in the ferment of the new republic

# Walking the Path with William Wordsworth

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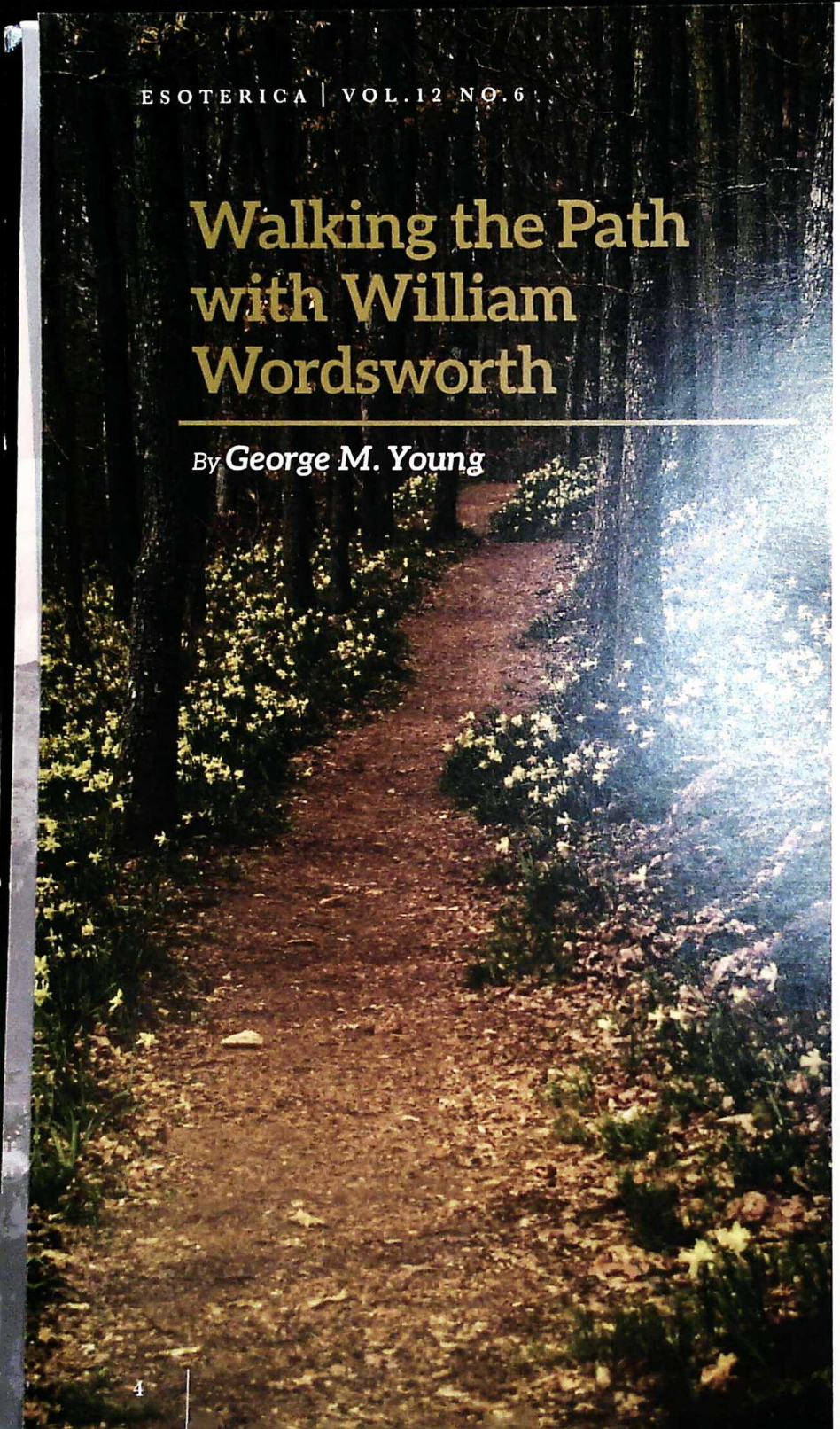



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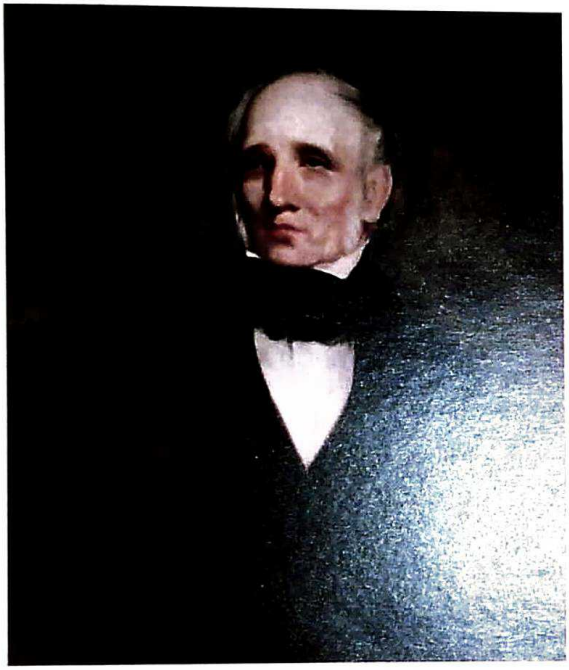


Anonymous portrait of Wordsworth, c. 1840-50.

and fell in love with a Frenchwoman, with whom he fathered a child. As the Reign of Terror began and tensions with England mounted, Wordsworth returned to England and did not see his child and her mother again for many years.

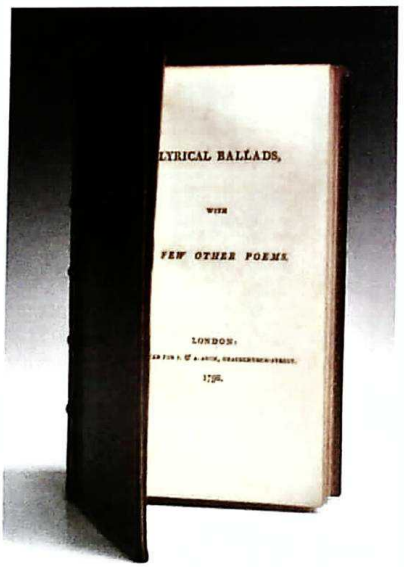
He published his first poems in his early twenties, but it was in 1798, in collaboration with his new, but soon-to-be everlasting friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that he published *Lyrical Ballads*, the work that introduced a new way of seeing and writing, established his reputation as a major poet, and launched the Romantic movement in English literature. Periodic awards and a modest inheritance allowed him, his sister Dorothy, and later his wife Mary, to devote all their energies and attention to literary activities, writing, conversing, rambling through the countryside, living simply and frugally without need of outside employment. Eventually, he was named poet laureate, and unlike his younger fellow Romantics Keats, Shelley, and Byron, Wordsworth lived a long, outwardly contented life, and from revolutionary beginnings gradually became a symbol of the English literary and political establishment.

The critics who chide him for turning away from the real world, for abandoning his youthful radicalism for comfortable, conservative royalism and Anglicanism, who see this turn of looking to nature as an escape, of writing about clouds and daffodils while ignoring the dire poverty and inequality all up and down the very hills and valleys he strolled through – these critics all miss what Wordsworth was really about. They analyse the exoteric to death and ignore or misread the esoteric.

I think he was, and is, for English poetry, along with Blake, Yeats, and Eliot, one of the great voices of theosophy in its root sense of divine wisdom. As other esoteric writers have so often noted, the most difficult thing is to find the right words to communicate not simply the abstract idea, but the living experience of gnosis. What does it actually feel like to be face-to-face with the divine? How can one share, not just repeat, abstractions – not just toss around the Greek or Hebrew or Sanskrit terminology, but actually share, in ordinary words, extraordinary truths? How can one speak

convincingly to mortals about immortality? What could Plato's man who returned to the mythical cave say to those who had never left? This is precisely what Wordsworth was able to do – supremely well.

Some academic scholars write about the *Lyrical Ballads* as if all Wordsworth wanted to do was to make a place for himself in literary history, to create something new and interesting for scholars to write about. And, to be fair, Wordsworth was certainly aware, and keen to make others aware, of what he was contributing to the tradition of English poetry. But to have a place in the literary pantheon was far from his main purpose. Wordsworth turned to everyday language, and to the life of people not simply in order to do something new in English poetry, but because he would best allow him to express in fresh, and straightforward terms his sense of sat, of what is truest and most real. He would put the world's oldest wisdom into the everyday language of his time and place; give the highest truths humble attire, not so much because he wished to exotericize the esoteric, but simply because this seemed to him the natural language and subject for a poet. In Christian England, he was certainly not the first, but was probably the clearest one to state certain ancient truths:




A first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting*
*The Soul that rises with us, our life's Sta.*
*Hath had elsewhere its setting,*
*And cometh from afar:*
*Not in entire forgetfulness,*
*And not in utter nakedness,*
*But trailing clouds of glory do we come*
*From God, who is our home:*
*Heaven lies about us in our infancy!*

In a note dictated late in life to his young friend Isabella Fenwick, Wordsworth worried that the "*presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence contained in these lines might have misled good and pious people to conclude that I meant to inculcate such a belief.*" He does not, of course, wish to preach heresy, but goes on to say that although the idea of previous existence is not explicitly Christian, "*not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favour.*" Furthermore, he adds, "*a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy.*"

We know that he was familiar with both Plato and Plotinus through the translations of the proto-Theosophist Thomas Taylor. But his best source for pre-existence and other ingredients of ancient wisdom was his profound self-knowledge, his acute sense of instinct and early memory, and his ability to see the glow of divinity in nature – in dreamlike vividness and splendour. The books of the great philosophers could stimulate and guide, but it was the experience

of deep dreaming while awake, the long meditative walks, and the visionary gaze that made the world transparent to him and enabled him to share those intimations with us. He told Miss Fenwick that the *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* began to come to him as he walked away from the abbey [illegible] and continued on for two or three days [illegible] through the Wye Valley. He had [illegible] poem in his mind by the time he [illegible] Bristol, and was able to write it down immediately and publish it soon after without changing a word.

Tintern Abbey.

His close friend and admirer, the great poet, critic, thinker, and conversationalist Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose best-known works include *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, was also a visionary, but of a different kind. Coleridge sought and found his Gnostic truths in exotic, far-flung places, where great winged birds make breezes blow, sacred rivers run, and caverns are measureless to man. Wordsworth was able to detect the aura of divinity in the small, humble, and near; in cottages among untrodden ways; in hedgerows hardly hedgerows; in little lines of sportive wood run wild; in fountains, meadows, hills, and groves; in fields of daffodils.

Wordsworth knows the sadness of innocence lost, but he also knows the serene joy that comes with wisdom and experience. He loves the riot of youth but also loves the steadfast calm of maturity. Life for Wordsworth is a rambling, strolling meditation: a walk along a path with flashes of ecstatic vision, then distraction and gradual loss of that experience, then, as if returning to a mantra, a return and ascent to an even higher level of vision. Nature is the mantra that keeps bringing him – and us with him – back into the real world, into our real selves, and toward God. In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth senses in his beloved sister, Dorothy, who accompanies him, a living image of the person he himself was when he visited the site five years earlier. He literally senses himself in another person and senses her in an earlier version of himself. Here, the shared experience of nature overcomes the passage of time, turns temporality into eternity, and allows the elimination of the boundaries between two human consciousnesses. This is truly the "*I*" and "*Thou*" as one, just as when he wanders "*lonely as a cloud*," he literally experiences himself in nature and nature in himself. Wordsworth, probably more than any other English poet, allows us to sense our natural kinship with, and refresh our distant memories of, the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds. He is the poet of both

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), English poet, literary critic, philosopher, and theologian who, with his friend Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets.

*to the moving leaves or water only, but to the distant peak of the hills arising suddenly, by some change of perspective, above the nearer horizon, to the passing space of light across the plain, to the lichened Druidic stone even, for a certain weird fellowship in it with the moods of men. It was like a "survival," in the peculiar intellectual temperament of a man of letters at the end of the eighteenth century, of that primitive condition, which some philosophers have traced in the general history of human culture, wherein all outward objects alike, including even the works of men's hands, were believed to be endowed with animation, and the world was "full of souls"—that mood in which the old Greek gods were first begotten, and which had many strange aftergrowths.*

Although he published his works openly and wanted to be widely read, Wordsworth realized that many if not most readers would skim over the deeper levels of his lines. To most, he would be as he seemed to me in my sophomore year, a poet who wrote good descriptions of nature and the simple life. He was called by certain of his contemporaries "*Wordswords*" and "*Worstwords*," and the reigning literary tastemaker of the previous generation, Dr Samuel Johnson, wrote a famous savage parody, not of Wordsworth himself but of the newly popular ballad form, which Wordsworth, who was supposed not to have much of a sense of humo cheerfully reprinted in the *Prefac* 1800:

*I put my hat upon my head*
*And walked into the Strand,*
*And there I met another man*
*Whose hat was in his hand.*

But Coleridge, then and now regarded as the [illegible] literary critic of the early [illegible] century, was Wordsworth's ideal [illegible] best reader. Fellow seer, lifelong friend, collaborator, brother through marriage, avid student of the esoteric, Coleridge was one of the three people (Wordsworth's wife Mary and sister Dorothy the other two) that the poet trusted to grasp every nuance. He addressed *The Prelude* to Coleridge, referred to through most of the body of the poem as Friend. In the last book of the poem, after showing us the growth of the poet's spiritual awareness from childhood through his schooling and university education, through his time in France during the Revolution, his return to England, his work in London, his travels in Switzerland, and later his moving to the Lake District, each book pyramiding upon the previous, the whole builds at last to a capstone description of an ascent of Mount Snowdon. As the poet emerges from the fog he has been climbing through, he finds a clear and glorious view, a summit of outlook and insight, in which he experiences full spiritual love and a power of imagination from which the poet has drawn

*Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought*
*Of human Being, Eternity, and God.*

In the concluding passages, he addresses

Coleridge, at last, by name and acknowledges Coleridge's contribution to the sense of life and body of work called *Wordsworth*. *"No wonder,"* Carlos Baker tells us, in his fine introduction to my well-thumbed 1961 edition of the *Selected Poems*, *"that Coleridge, having heard this poem read aloud, rose up at the end to find himself 'in prayer.'"* On that day, for that poet and that listener, the reading of a poem about the growth of spiritual awareness became itself a spiritual experience. Even for us who were or are sophomores in literature, the exo-teric Wordsworth offers much to appreciate. But regardless of how much or little we gain from early exposure to him, the deeper, esoteric Wordsworth will still be there, where he has been for two and a half centuries, steadfast, calm, waiting to speak to us when we are ready.

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***George M. Young** Ph.D., is a Slavicist who has taught Russian and comparative literature at Grinnell and Dartmouth colleges, although for many years he ran a fine arts and auction business. He is the author of many articles and books on Russian literature and religious philosophy including the translation of Elena Pisareva's journal called* The Light of the Russian Soul: A Personal Memoir of Early Russian Theosophy, *(Quest Books, 2008). Young currently teaches English literature at the University of New England.*


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# What is Truth?

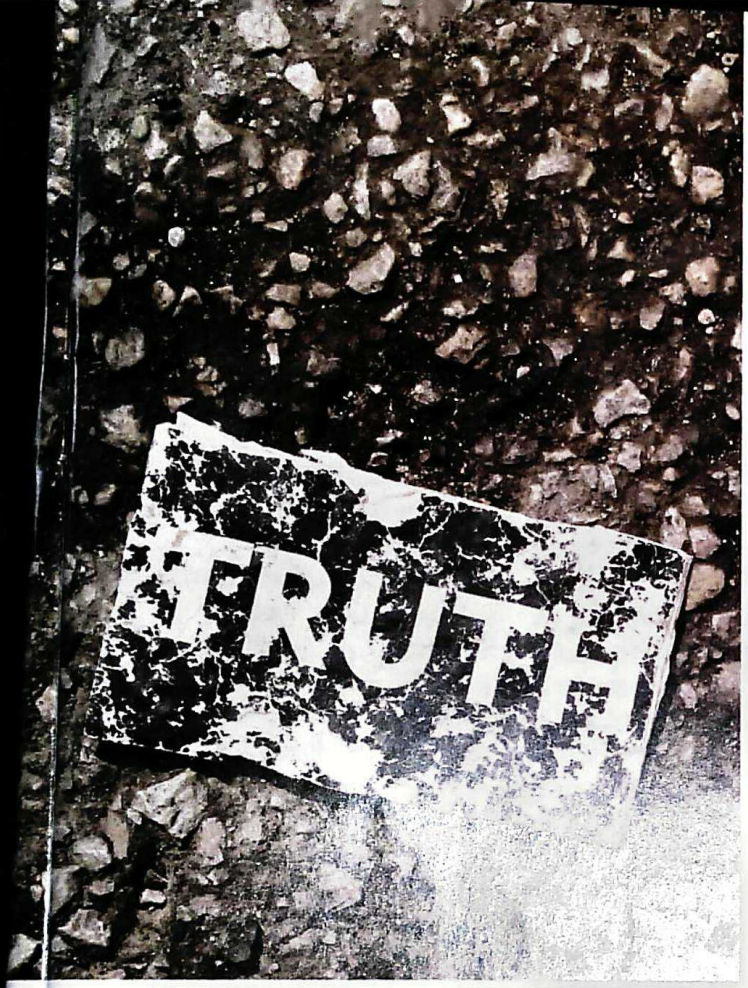
By **Alan Senior**

*'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'*

John XIII: 32

When Pilate asked Jesus *'What is Truth?'* (John XVIII: 38) it was probably a rhetorical question. He may have thought that truth was too elusive to grasp and, in any case, how could Jesus have given the Roman Governor an answer that would have meant anything to him, for Truth is One, without countless opinions, arguments, prejudices or imperfect faiths? Even the disciples had received but a little knowledge of what was ultimate and absolute, whilst those 'outside the circle' gained something, perhaps, from the parables.

The whole truth is too sacred to be given out indiscriminately. It must be hidden away from the eyes of the profane as it cannot be comprehended under its true light... veiled, to protect it from desecration and selfishness. Hence we are left with relative truths only – make of them what we will – and hence, too, the foundation of the ancient Mystery Schools and their rites of initiation, to preserve that which is too dazzling and profound for others to distinguish and try to describe. This led to the motto of the true Occultist: *'to know, to dare and to KEEP SILENT'*. So Jesus remained speechless, for absolute truth cannot be divulged in a world ruled by conditioning, contradictory doctrines, dogmas, scheming politicians and corrupt governments. How could Pilate, a tool of the brutal Roman Empire that worshipped many gods and a 'divine' emperor, be told *'thou art THAT'*, which is beyond status, egoism, worldly wisdom, nationality, time and space ... devoid of name, form, qualities and defects, the range of all speech and objects of consciousness –




Michael Carruth

remaining pure, absolute and eternal?

People who have come to consult sages like Krishnamurti, seeking knowledge or blessings, or to solve their problems fully loaded with questions for him, might have been told that they arrived with mind and body problems only, which can be solved by finding out who they really are; if not the mind and the body, then what are they? Solve that by quietly reflecting on what they are not and gradually they may come to understand that they are really the formless, timeless *'I Am'* which prevails everlastingly when they are able to abide in the true Self with its limitless universal consciousness. If they realize this inwardly they can go, he might have said, to work on themselves earnestly and ceaselessly, until the lower self is liberated. Then they will know, definitely, who they truly are.

But all that occupies us for most of the day is far from the truth and totally unreal, an illusion within the objective world... mere entertainment just to pass the time. Yet beyond this phenomenal world lies an awareness apart from intellectual knowing and that forest of words entangled in countless concepts and collective thoughts... thoughts which, like all our problems, belong only to the body-mind, the result of having lived in a state of conditioned existence. Realize this and do something about it, without being confined to that body, because whatever you try to become is not you, for [illegible] from this everyday world there is this [illegible] awareness. Beware of saying [illegible]ning which will be translated in one [illegible]y by one listener and in another way by another listener as they have each understood it... which may be happening right now as I say this. Thus the process goes on and on all the time, whilst our true state can never be described.

So final knowledge is to be found only in ourselves; supreme illumination lies within *'To reach the Sun of Truth,'* says H.P. Blavatsky (HPB), *'we must work in deadly earnest for the development of our higher nature'* (*Collected Writings* IX: 32). Such latent powers and perceptions develop slowly and grow steadily towards that immovable, unqualified truth which is not of this world with its limitations

and illusions. *'Man, know thyself'* was the greatest truth ever taught, for inner perception is the only way to eternal truth when all outer, sense-based living has been left far behind, whilst realizing that all thoughts are merely the result of our previous conditioning.

*'And who loves truth in this age for its own sake?'* HPB asks. To search diligently and live according to this *'symbol of Eternity'* is practically impossible in a society whose highest values are built on appearances, not on reality... on self-assertion, not on intrinsic values. If you doubt this, tune into the dozens of TV channels in this country. Channel-hopping is a sure way to gauge the population's general level of consciousness. In the words of the Mäha-Chohan: *'Between dwindling superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism the white dove of truth has nowhere where to rest her weary, unwelcome foot.'* The world is in such a poor state because not none of its religions and philosophies can offer the solution to the many problems crowding in on it. Nor have people ever possessed *'the TRUTH and nothing but the TRUTH'*, whilst *'the lethal emanations of modern civilization kill all goodness and truth.'* (HPB).

Erik McLean

Where are the unprejudiced minds, the pure spiritual consciousness in a world whose inhabitants live at an ever-increasing speed, seemingly dominated by stress, greed, violence and corruption? Is truth ever honoured in such a world? Yet, if truth is absolute it must also be omnipresent and universal, underlying every world-religion if searched for, but only at its roots and in its original growth, never in later dogmatisms and sects. Thus it must be filtered out, purified and freed from error... The motto *'There is no religion higher than Truth'*, stems from those Alexandrian philosophers who were called *'lovers of the truth'* Theo-Sophia, Divine Wisdom, is a synonym of truth; a beacon... *'the pure colourless sunlight and shoreless ocean of eternal truth without the illusory veil of the senses'* as HPB put it. This truth, which lies behind and beyond deceptive appearances, is reached only when we are complete masters of self, able to control all our physical and psychic senses, thus awakening to consciousness our divine nature, not governed by concepts and notions.

Sankaräcärya's *Viveka-Cüdämani* (*The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*) points out that *'the nature of the one reality must be known by one 's own clear perception and not through any learned man'* (56) and Sankarä stresses, too, that if the supreme truth remains unknown, the study of the scriptures is useless; *'even if the supreme truth is known the study of the scriptures is useless, for it must be sought out by intuition.'* (61). This is true spiritual liberation; in the Upanishads it is called *'destruction of ignorance'*. So let us pay heed to what the great teachers have said about Satya, absolute truth. Again, the Mäha-Chohan: *'All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory, apparent self, to recognize our*

Emma Simpson

*true Self in a transcendental divine life.'* And we should perpetually remind ourselves that the things of earth are but appearances and imitations of truth... The things of earth are not the TRUTH! Thus *'the wise know that... the supreme truth... is absolute consciousness, in which are united the knower, the known and the knowledge, infinite and unchangeable.'* (Viveka-Cüdämani, 241).

If you are truly *'in the work'* in this world, this labour involves, eventually, a complete transformation of the self. You are here to give up identification with the body, which is not you. Finding your true identity also solves the riddle of *'I Amness'*, recognizing your real Self in the process, beyond the usual mind-flow. Be alert to this; stay awake! Jesus constantly had to use those two words to the disciples, to remind them of what they were in essence. This constant awareness means dispensing with all those concepts we have carried around with us and wrongly called knowledge – totally unreal, including the name you go by, those labels given to you since birth. Because you are not that, you are the manifest Brahman as the Hindus term it.

To digress, what of the future? What lies in store for humanity? A repetition of the present, only darker and more terrible, as some would have us believe? Here I am reminded of the current dangers from AI – artificial intelligence – where these systems will be powerful enough within a few years to kill many humans if we fail to control the technology or see that AI will have the ability to create new bioweapons that could eventually lead to the total extinction of humanity. This is a real concern that means all countries must work together to regulate AI. But is humanity capable of working together as one in a world where dictators constantly emerge with ambitions of conquest of other countries, even a bid for world domination? Are we sufficiently advanced as a species to work as one humanity, allowing us to move to a new dawn for mankind – pure sunlight and truth, charity and happiness? I think we all know the answer to that, yet it is only selfless efforts that will lead to Satya Yuga, the Age of goodness, truth and purity, for happiness cannot exist where those elements are absent. So it is our present duty to take part in any work which tries to alleviate human misery whenever possible.

Emiliano Vittoriosi

Humanity's sole mission is *'to rekindle the torch of truth so long extinguished for all but the very few and to keep that truth alive by the formation of a fraternal union of mankind, the only soil in which the good seed can grow'*

(HPB). How many are up to such a task? Let us remember that there are many striving for truth out there against the Powers of Darkness and that there is not a single member of society who is not able to do something to aid the cause of truth and universal brotherhood... to make that something an accomplished fact.

So we should cultivate VIRYA, the dauntless energy spoken of in HPB's *The Voice of the Silence 'that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial'*, leading to SAT, the one eternal and Absolute Reality and Truth, all the rest being illusion. That knowledge alone should spur us on to greater efforts. Meanwhile, let us meditate constantly on Brahma-Vidyä, sacred knowledge, the central truth of the Upanishads, summed up by *'Realize thou art THAT'*. This is the final truth the goal of all wisdom. There is nothing other than That, it is eternal and unchangeable, so whatever is temporary and bound by time cannot be the truth.

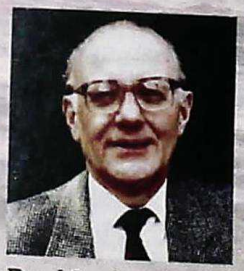
Before you fall asleep at night let your mind dwell on this: the ätman (the real Self which is you) existed before birth and death and is absolute being, without beginning or end, no longer drowned in the ocean of egotism and conditioned existence. Be aware of it now... this *'I am'* which exists beyond material existence and all objects – unchangeable, knowing that the supreme spirit and ätman are one in eternal bliss...

Therefore, there is no real existence in the universe other than the supreme ätman, so let sleep overtake you having understood that *'thou art That'*, which is the ultimate, pure, eternal, the one reality, with [illegible]ätman perpetually absorbed in the Absol[illegible] for only the Absolute prevails; there is [illegible]hing but the Absolute. ❊

**TRUTH** (from *Paracelsus*)

TRUTH is within ourselves: it takes [illegible]o rise
From outward things, whate'er you [illegible]nay believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception – which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and to know,
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

***Robert Browning***



***Alan Senior** was a past general Secretary of the Scottish Theosophical Society. He has given many lectures and study weekends on early Christianity. One of his interests is the Nag- Hammadi Library also known as the Dead Sea Scrolls and which he is regarded as something of an authority.*

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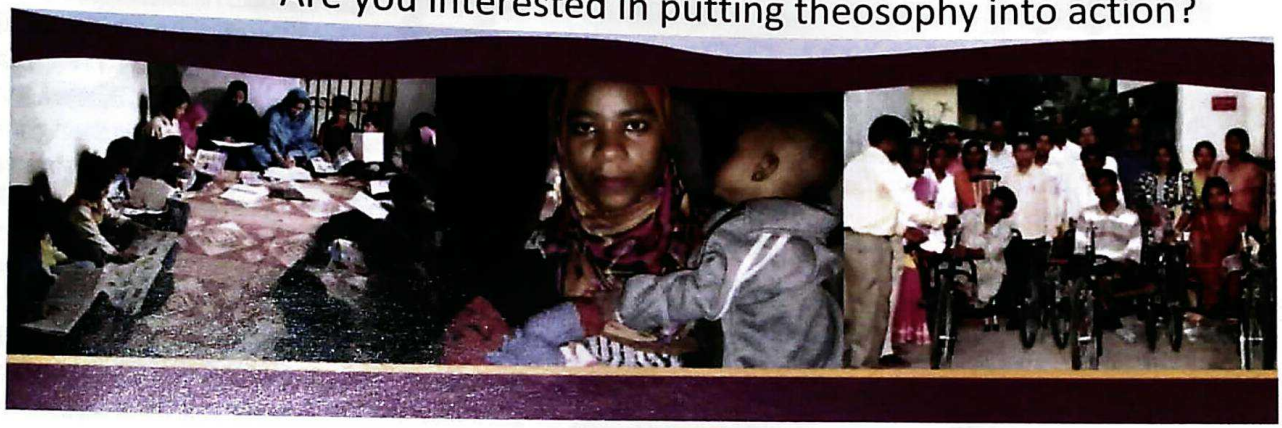

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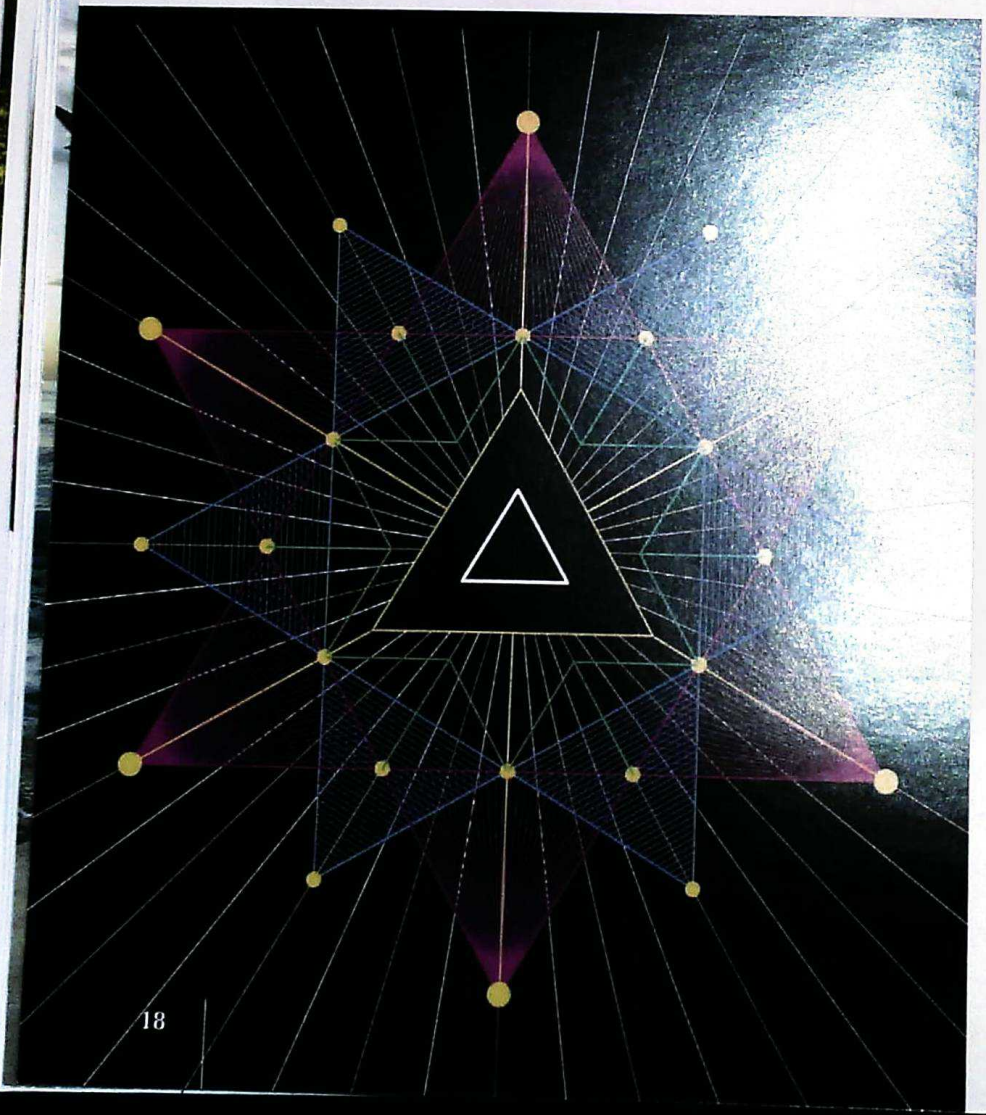
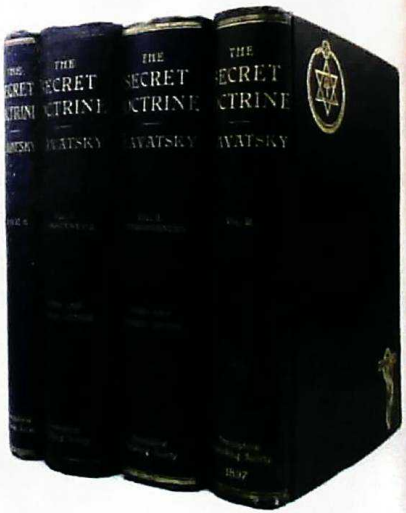
# The Third Biennial Forum on *The Secret Doctrine*

By ***Ananya Sri Ram***



As we approach the third bi ial forum on *The Secret Doctr* (held October 26-29 2023 a e Krotona Institute of Theosc ty in Ojai, California and via Zoom), it seems appropriate to highlight just a few thought about H. P. Blavatsky's monumental work with help from the Quest book *H.P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*. It may be safe to say that some members of the TS are familiar with the work known as *The Secret Doctrine* but have little understanding of what the Secret Doctrine is. This does not diminish either the curiosity about the work nor does it hinder serious students of Theosophy from delving into the maze of it. Study classes, self-study courses, articles, as well as several books have been designed to help guide students in their study of *The Secret Doctrine*. The question always remains: where does one begin?

It might seem inane to say, but *The Secret Doctrine* is not a book to be read as one would read a story from beginning to end. It requires a mindset of a different quality. The teachings, as HPB herself has written, are not hers, but are the threads of innumerable works from innumerable sources given on the ancient



wisdom. The everyday mind cannot understand that which is not from the everyday mind. The teachings are from those exalted beings, not of our mundane small world, who lived according to the esoteric or occult laws. The beauty of *The Secret Doctrine* is that it not only explains how the universe came into Being, but how that Beingness is what sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells through the use of the physical form. As Sri Mahadeva Ashish states in the article *The Secret Doctrine as a Contribution to World Thought*, *'The power that raised man from dust is, in the last analysis, the same as the power that looks through the eyes, hears through the ears, and touches with the hands.'*

The difficulty we have is our everyday mind separates everything around us. It cannot fathom the unity of all life – of everything that surrounds us. Even the bricks that make our buildings are created by that Beingness that sees and feels the brick. "*There is no dead matter*," HPB writes. This is the basic barrier that keeps us from understanding many of the basic teachings of Theosophy. If we had a complete and total realization that there is only "*ONE LIFE, eternal, invisible, yet omnipresent, without beginning or end . . . the one self-existing REALITY*," and that this "*boundless and immutable Principle, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception*," we would no longer see the world as separate from ourselves. We have fleeting moments of this oneness, but as *The Voice of the Silence* states "*the mind is the slayer of the real.*" We must slay the slayer.

Through a disciplined practice, we can slowly strengthen the Buddhic quality within. This vesture allows us to see what is considered "*unseen*" and "*to know*" that which is not obvious. It is often considered an intuitive quality, but there is a vast difference between working from the Buddhic and working from that which allows intuition. The Buddhic quality within knows the oneness of all life. It is imbued with the divine. There are plenty of people with intuitive abilities, but few of a Buddhic nature. Our attachments cloud our ability to see things without a filter or judgment.

*Leo*

It is this Buddhic quality we must bring forth in order to approach the teachings of *The Secret Doctrine*. This is why the student is encouraged to take their time with its study. Like the slow process of evolution that humanity has gone through to reach the present time, we must allow patience for the insights to come to the surface. This is not always easy as Sri Mahadeva Ashish states in the same article mentioned above, "*Any traveller of the spiritual path ought to know that his road will lead him away from the well-trodden ways of gregarious mean and into the deep and unfrequented jungles of the mind. It makes not the slightest difference where one's teaching comes from; one cannot blame the teaching for the beasts that*

*lurk in one's private jungle. By whatever path one goes, sooner or later tensions are going to arise."*

This may seem like another barrier, but when looked at from another perspective, we may find ourselves taking the first step to an everlasting journey. Keeping the realization in mind that all life is one, we understand that humanity lies within us, not outside ourselves. We are forever looking outside for the answers to the struggles we face in the manifested world. To know that the struggles we have within are reflected without can be a startling, but helpful realization. HPB states, *"Although linked to all other by the One Life, each man exists at the same time as an individual Self, a partial expression of the One Infinite Reality. We may thus raise our eyes not to an external far away Creator, but to the spark of God within . . . Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls. . ."*

Here we have a greater clue to the life needed in order to peel away the excrescences that the physical world lays upon us. HPB could not have summed it up better than in *The Golden Stairs*. Each step a step toward the virtues needed to live a life in union with the divine by questioning societal beliefs and letting go of anything that causes even a prick of separation of any kind. In *Man – the Miracle of Miracles* Helen V. Zahara writes, *"H.P. Blavatsky tells us that many of the difficulties which beset mankind, which many people attribute to Providence, would disappear if men would work in brotherliness and harmony, instead of in disunity and conflict. She says: 'Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the 'ways of Providence' . . . If one breaks the laws of Harmony . . . one must be prepared to fall into the chaos oneself has produced.'"*

Karma, the exquisite law of balance and harmony, can be our greatest guide should we keep such a law in mind, knowing we are setting our own course for the future. Zahara astutely writes, *"The pilgrimage for every soul is said to be obligatory, and we read that at first evolutions are governed by natural impulse. But then suddenly we are introduced to the idea of self-induced and self-devised efforts, which each*

## THE GOLDEN STAIRS

A clean life, an open mind,
A pure heart, an eager intellect,
An unveiled spiritual perception,
A brotherliness for all,

A readiness to give and receive advice and instruction,
A loyal sense of duty to the Teacher,
A willing obedience to the behests of TRUTH,
Once we have placed our confidence in,
And believe that Teacher to be in possession of it;

A courageous endurance of personal injustice,
A brave declaration of principles,
A valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked,
And a constant eye to the ideal of human progression,
And perfection which the secret science depicts—

These are the golden stairs
Up the steps of which the learner may climb
To the Temple of Divine Wisdom.

—H. P. Blavatsky

*soul makes after having acquired individuality. There then enters the action of free will, the results of which, however, are subject to the law of karma."* In other words, everything around us is evolving. Everything. Even when it seems like humanity is going backwards, we are evolving because we have no choice. Everything is designed to evolve. Like an escalator that continues upward, we ride along because we have no choice. What we do choose is how we want to ride the escalator. That is where our free will comes into play.

Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, One Infinite Reality, Karma, Buddhi, Be-ness, Beingness, these are all concepts that if pondered seriously, can lead a student to a place of wonder and joy, especially knowing who we are is no different than the beauty that lies before us. How can we not marvel at this incredible system of which we are a part? To know that we hold our own destiny within, with a guide like *The Secret Doctrine* without, is an encouraging prompt to any student of Theosophy. May we be forever grateful to the teacher who made this possible, H.P. Blavatsky.

*Ananya Sri Ram has been a member of the Theosophical Society since 1983. Ananya's introduction into Theosophy began after visits from her parents who had passed when she was a teenager. Since then, she uses theosophical concepts in her practice as a mental health counselor. She presently lives and volunteers at the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California.*

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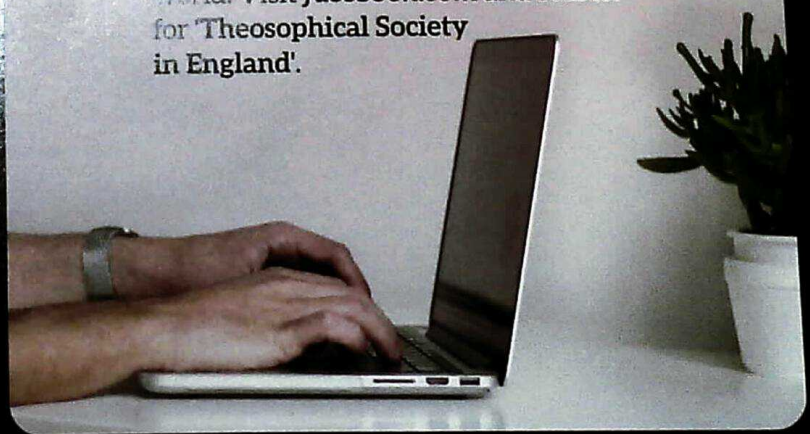
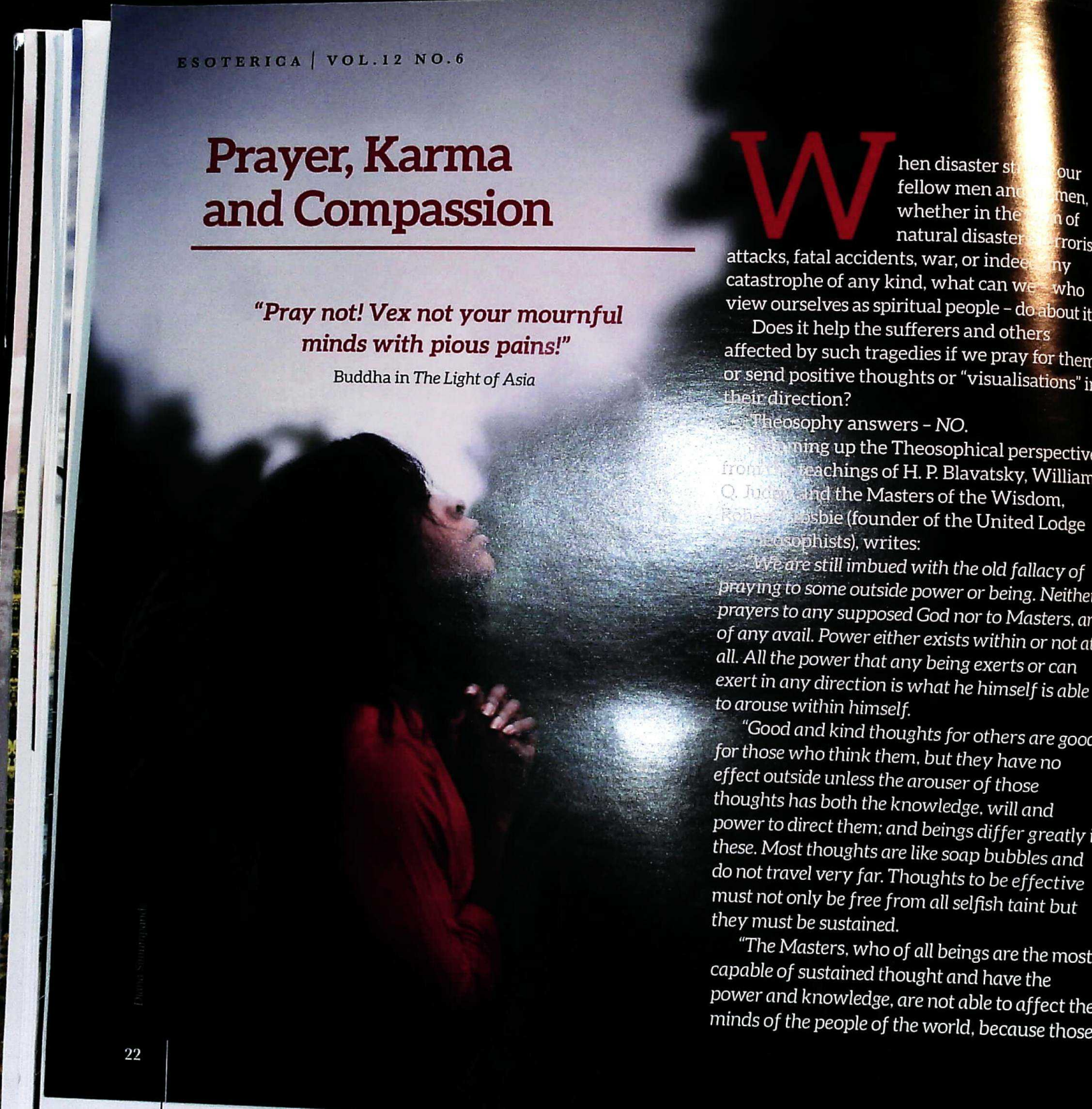


# Prayer, Karma and Compassion

***"Pray not! Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!"***

Buddha in *The Light of Asia*



When disaster st[illegible] our fellow men an[illegible]men, whether in the [illegible]n of natural disaster[illegible]rroris attacks, fatal accidents, war, or indee[illegible]ny catastrophe of any kind, what can we – who view ourselves as spiritual people – do about it?

Does it help the sufferers and others affected by such tragedies if we pray for them or send positive thoughts or "visualisations" in their direction?

The Theosophy answers – *NO.*

[illegible]ming up the Theosophical perspective from [illegible]eachings of H. P. Blavatsky, William Q. Judge [illegible]nd the Masters of the Wisdom, Rob[illegible]sbie (founder of the United Lodge [illegible]sophists), writes:

*"We are still imbued with the old fallacy of praying to some outside power or being. Neither prayers to any supposed God nor to Masters, are of any avail. Power either exists within or not at all. All the power that any being exerts or can exert in any direction is what he himself is able to arouse within himself.*

*"Good and kind thoughts for others are good for those who think them, but they have no effect outside unless the arouser of those thoughts has both the knowledge, will and power to direct them; and beings differ greatly in these. Most thoughts are like soap bubbles and do not travel very far. Thoughts to be effective must not only be free from all selfish taint but they must be sustained.*

*"The Masters, who of all beings are the most capable of sustained thought and have the power and knowledge, are not able to affect the minds of the people of the world, because those*

*minds are constantly full of active, selfish thoughts. If Masters were able to affect humanity by their thoughts, they wouldn't have to write books. If people, who can hear and read words intended to arouse the best in them, benefit so little by them, what hope is there in fugitive thinking?"* (From *Answers To Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 234)

When asked whether Theosophists pray, Madame Blavatsky answered, *"We do not. We act, instead of talking. . . . we try to replace fruitless and useless prayer by meritorious and good-producing actions."* (See *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 66)

It is worth pointing out that it is petitionary prayer – prayer which involves asking God or any other entity or force to do something for oneself or others - which Theosophy considers *"fruitless and useless."* It does not dismiss other and more legitimate forms of prayer. But in most people's minds, petitionary prayer is the only kind of prayer.

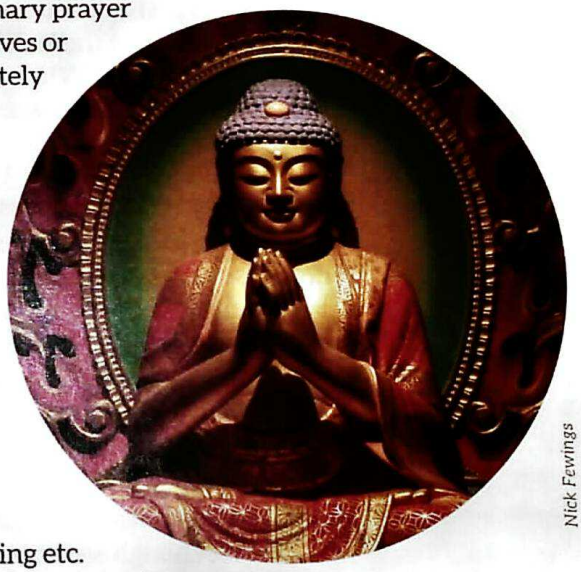
Why is it *"fruitless and useless"* to pray in this way?

To take an example from Buddhism, which in some respects is very close to the Theosophical philosophy, Buddha taught that the universe is neither created nor governed by any type of God. It is all governed by absolute, immutable, impersonal LAW and not by any Being whatsoever.

The Law of Karma is the outworking of this Law. Since everything proceeds unfailingly according to the Law of Karma (in the past we created our present and in the present, we are creating our future), Buddhism teaches that prayer is futile and pointless.

The Law of self-created destiny which is known as Karma (the law of cause and effect, action and reaction, sequence and consequence) is the means whereby the universe maintains its constant balance, harmony, and equilibrium.

Nothing can ever happen outside of Karma. Everything that happens to us in life is either karmically destined or karmically permitted. It cannot be otherwise.



Nick Fewings

Thus, all petitionary prayer (whether for ourselves or for others) is ultimately vain and futile as Buddha taught. Everything proceeds according to Karma, whether we like it or not, whether we believe and accept it or not, and no amount of praying, crying, pleading, begging, interceding, affirming etc. – regardless of how sincere and filled with faith it may be, or how desperate the situation may seem – can interrupt or interfere with the Law of the Universe. One of many proofs of this is the fact that virtually all prayers go forever unanswered, as any honest and sane religious minister will readily admit.

The Law knows what it is doing and everything proceeds perfectly and in divine order, as it should, although many times it may not appear that way to our currently limited perception.

As the Theravada Buddhist monk Narada says in his book *The Buddha and His Teachings*: *"Petitional or intercessory prayers are denounced in Buddhism and in their stead is meditation which leads to self-control, purification, and enlightenment. Both meditation and service form salient characteristics of Buddhism."* The exact same thing can be said of Theosophy.

It is sad but true that those who pride themselves on their supposed spirituality are also often some of the least generous and most selfish of all people. When disaster strikes, the two most effective and worthwhile things we can do are:

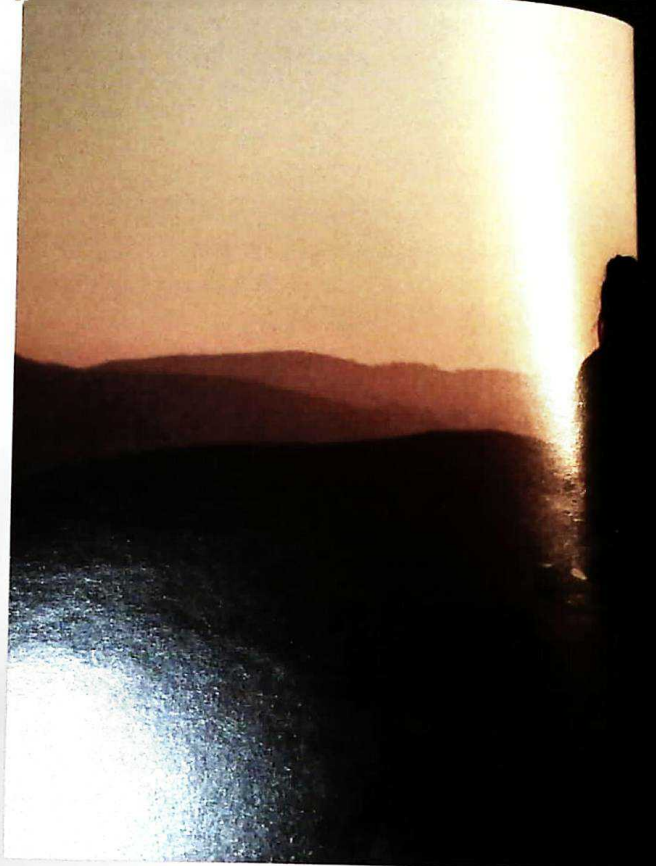
## 1

**Contribute in whatever way** – be it by donation of finances, direct practical assistance, offering a comforting and helpful support to the sufferers, etc. – to the relief of those affected by the tragedy. *"Inaction [illegible] deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin,"* says H. P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, where it is also stated that Enlightenment *"is of loving deeds the child."*

It is not enough for us just to know and talk about the importance of compassion and selfless service . . . we must DO it, we must PROVE it, we must LIVE it . . . and until spiritual people become *"doers of the Word, not just hearers only,"* they can never expect to be taken seriously by the world at large.

## 2

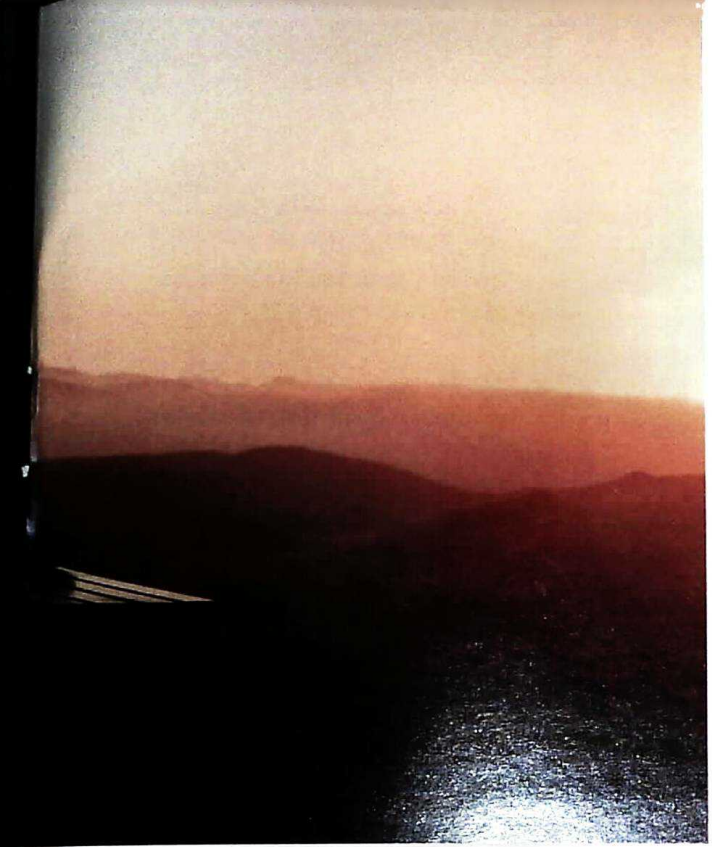
**Study the teachings in depth about the Law of Karma** – and endeavour to gain an even deeper and more practical understanding of this great truth – not merely for our own sake



[illegible] so that we can work wisely to put these concepts into the public consciousness and to free the Western mind from the pernicious Christian conditioning which causes so many to attribute evil or unfortunate happenings to either an *"angry God"* or a *"wicked Devil."*

These Meditation Points on Karma may be helpful in this regard:

- Whatever IS, is Karma.
- Karma is the whole thing.
- Everything proceeds according to the Law of Karma.
- The unerring, incredibly far reaching Law of cause and effect, action and reaction, sequence and consequence.
- The Ultimate Law of the Universe.



Sage Friedman

- The way, the means, the method whereby the Universe maintains its balance, harmony, and equilibrium.
- The great Adjuster.
- The Power that controls [illegible].
- Each one of us is always setting causes in motion, every moment, through every action, every word, and every thought.
- Every cause set in motion will always produce its corresponding correlative effect.
- Be not deceived, the Law is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap . . . in this life or the next.
- The Law of Karma is the Law of self-created destiny.
- In the past I created my present and in the present I am creating my future.
- We do all have a "lot" in life – our Karmic lot – our prarabdha Karma. (Prarabdha Karma is the cause of our current destiny and is meant to be dealt with in this lifetime.)
- Everything that happens to us is something which is either Karmically destined or Karmically permitted.
- Nothing can ever, has ever, does ever, or will ever, happen outside the Law of Karma.
- *"Chafe not at Karma" . . . "Rigid justice rules the world."*

When properly understood along with its inextricable twin of Reincarnation, the teaching of Karmic Law will be found so logical, so self-consistent, so philosophical, and so satisfactory to the soul and the intelligence, that human beings will discard the ignorant notions of a personal or anthropomorphic (human-like) God, petitionary prayer, and cosmic injustice, in favour of the Ancient and Ageless Wisdom that the Masters teach: *"the ONE Life, the ONE Law, the ONE Element."*

But when finally accepting that there is in fact no real injustice in the world and that everything a soul reaps is a direct result of what it has itself sown, let none of us neglect for even one moment the practical and sincere application of compassion for all who suffer. We are always able to help others to the exact extent that their Karma will permit and thus we must always do our utmost.

The Masters of Wisdom behind the Theosophical Movement make it extremely clear that they do not believe in any personal God and that they do not pray to anyone or anything. Neither did HPB. We find the Master or Mahatma M. saying that –

*"The Founders* [of the Theosophical Society] *prayed to no Deity in beginning the Theosophical Society, nor asked his help since . . . A constant sense of abject dependence upon a Deity which he regards as the sole source of power makes a man lose all self-reliance and the spurs to activity and initiative. Having begun by creating a father and guide unto himself, he becomes like a boy and remains so to his old age, expecting to be led by the hand on the smallest as well as the greatest issues of life."*

After being informed that Christians would be inclined to accuse her and other Theosophists of *"pride and blasphemy"* for their refusal to offer up prayers, pleas, and worship to an anthropomorphic God, HPB responds in *The Key to Theosophy* (p. 71) by saying:

*"It is they, on the contrary, who [illegible] pride in their belief that the Absolute [illegible] Infinite, even if there was such a thing [illegible] possibility of any relation between [illegible] unconditioned and the conditioned [illegible] to listen to every foolish or [illegible] And it is they again, who [illegible] in teaching that an Omniscient [illegible] God needs uttered prayers to [illegible] he has to do!"*

Brett Jordan

*"Thou canst not travel on the Path be[fore] thou hast become that Path itself.*

*"Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry [of pa]in like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.*

*"Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of p[ity] before thyself hast wiped it from the suffer[er's] eye.*

*"But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed."*

From *The Voice of the Silence*, translated by H. P. Blavatsky from *The Book of the Golden Precepts.*

When others are suffering and in need, we do not waste our time and energy by praying for them. We apply our time and energy wisely and effectively by doing all that is within our power to help, comfort, and minister to them in a practical and actual way.

One prayer that is worth having is *Help me to help others!* but the only one who can answer that prayer is ourselves. ❋

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Do you have something to share from reading *Esoterica*? Your comments and thoughts about the articles would be very welcome.

Email Julie Cunningham: *esoterica@theosoc.org.uk*

# The Voice That Speaks

And in the deep silence
The mysterious event will occur
Which will prove that the way has been found

Call it by what name you will
It is a voice that speaks –
Where there is none to speak.
It is a messenger without form or substance –
Or it is the flower of the soul
That has opened

It can not be described by any metaphor
But it can be felt after –
Looked for –
And desired –
Even amid the raging of a storm.

The silence may last a moment in time
Or it may last a thousand years
But it will end

Yet you will carry its strength with you

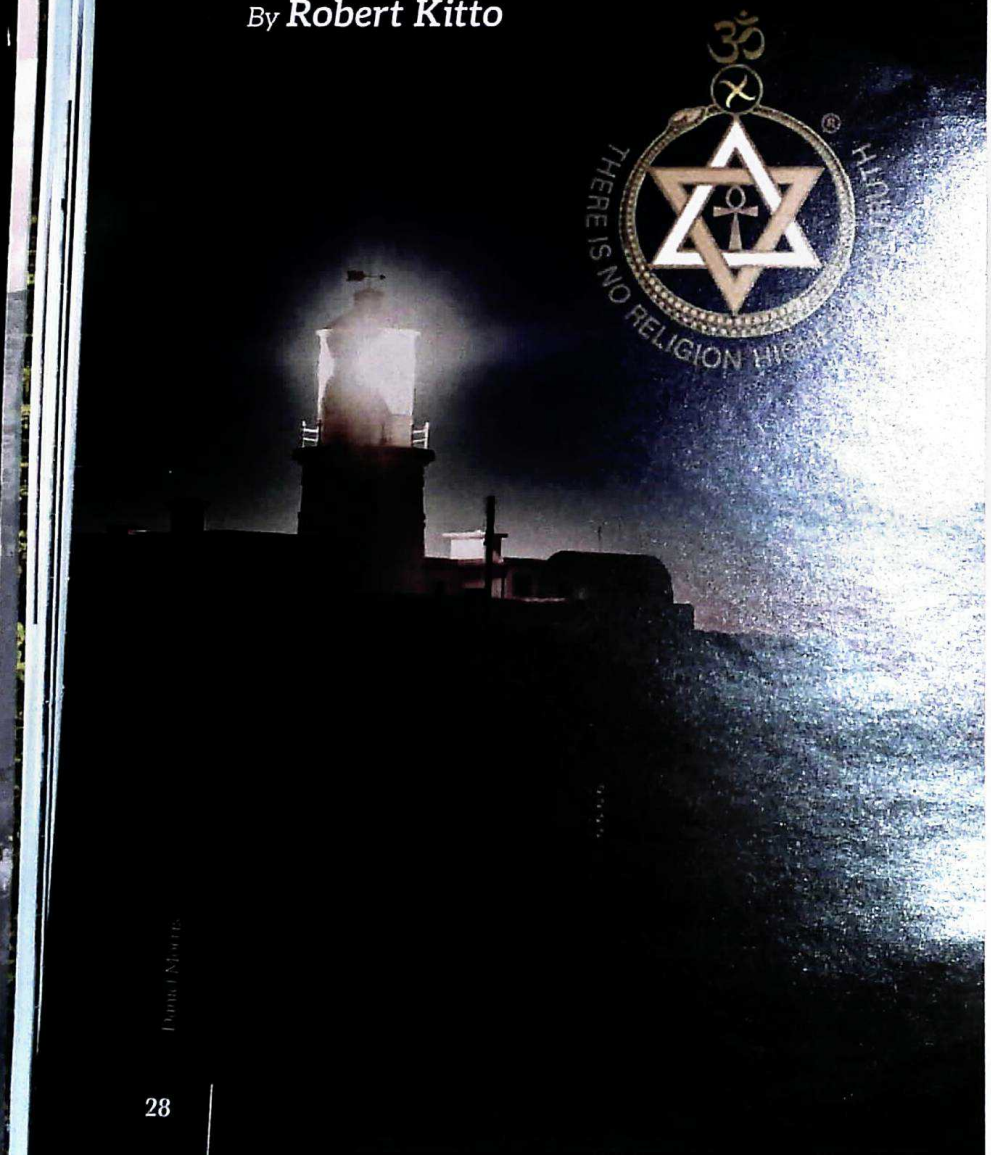
Again and again the battle must be fought and won

It is only for an interval
That nature can be still.

From *Light On The Path*

# The Theosophical Society – Finding Its Aim?

By **Robert Kitto**




In *The Key to Theosophy*, we find:

**ENQUIRER:** *Then what is the good of joining the so-called Theosophical Society? Where is the incentive?*

**THEOSOPHIST:** *None, except the advantage of getting esoteric instructions, the genuine doctrines of the 'Wisdom Religion', and, if the real programme is carried out, deriving much help from mutual aid and sympathy.*

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), *The Key to Theosophy*, [illegible], p21.

To what extent have the aspirations of the above THEOSOPHIST been realized? That it remained necessary eleven years after its 1875 founding for a further attempt to be made at setting out Aims [1] and thereby 'the real programme' of The Theosophical Society (TS) is indicative of the special difficulties encountered by the Founders in their pioneering work of disseminating Ancient Wisdom to Westerners. H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) 1886 manuscript now referred to as the 'Original Programme' [2] – was, in part, a response to those believing they knew the real programme better than the Founders and the Brotherhood of Adepts behind the scenes. The challenge came from those – as HPB expressed it – motivated by 'self-culture' at the expense of 'mutual-culture'. The full statement is

important as it throws light on the meaning of 'Brotherhood' within the context of the TS: *"Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of mutual development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved.'*

From *Collected Writings*, H. P. Blavatsky, vol.7 p 160.

What HPB calls 'Mutual-culture', however, is dependent upon individuals having a reasonable understanding of shared Aims and Objects. Whilst the separate Societies, Lodges, and Centres of today are superficially united in the (necessarily simplified) Objects[3] it is easily arguable that these, because of their simplification, fail into further misunderstanding and misapplication. If one reads and studies the Literature of the Society, then one will find that:

- Universal Brotherhood (Object 1) is not simply a cohort of members. Mahatma KH describes it as *'an association of strong magnetic yet dissimilar forces and polarities centred around one dominant idea.*[4]
- 'Study' of comparative religion, etc., (Object 2) does not mean study in a modern intellectual sense. *'See in study a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies'.*[5]
- The investigation of the *'unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man'* (Object 3) is not intended to elicit a 'phenomenal' interpretation (for as Mahatma KH makes clear; *'It is not physical phenomena but ... universal ideas that we study.'*)[6]

Today's Theosophical Society has 3 Objects, which are:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

Worse still, the three Objects fail to refer to 'Theosophy', and thus lose their contextual setting. This is a surprising omission given HPB's assertion in *The Key to Theosophy* that the TS should show *'that such a thing as Theosophy exists'*. Theosophy was necessarily undefined during the establishment of the TS, but we now benefit from the literature of the founders, and can say: Theosophy is a body of teachings and doctrines, having consistency with that disseminated by the founders of the modern Theosophical Movement, explanatory of Universal Laws; Laws that establish the principle of Unity inherent in Nature and which are the basis of Universal Brotherhood. The three published Objects, therefore, do

First edition of *The Key to Theosophy*, published in 1889.

not exist in isolation but have Theosophy as their basis. A set of comprehensive and coherent Objects or Aims should make appropriate reference to Theosophy.

Detached from Theosophy, the Objects become ambiguous. Understanding them relies on the study (and contemplation and assimilation) of commentaries scattered throughout various articles and publications. Yet how many members shy away from such 'study' because of classroom connotations, or are unwitting victims of cultural 'dumbing-down' pressures? How many TS members can reasonably summarize the Aims of the body of which they are part? In some parts of the Movement, even a simple definition of Theosophy becomes lost.

Radha Burnier, (1923-2013), president of the Theosophical Society Adyar from 1980 until her death in 2013.

The TS Adyar is particularly vulnerable as the much-vaunted and attractive 'Freedom of Thought' principle risks giving way to an 'Anything goes' Society as individuals in small but sufficient numbers cause Lodges to drift into schemes of their own. Individual Freedom of Thought should not cause the Society itself to be diverted from its work, and sporadic efforts have sought to address this issue: The 1949 'Freedom of the Society' resolution published by the TS Adyar declares that '[Theosophical] *Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization*'. Notwithstanding this, the TS Centenary World Congress held in 1975 found it necessary to warn that '*Our freedoms are essential, but a Lodge or Society too loosely run can do the Cause more harm than good*'. Later still, the past International President recognized continuing issues, saying: "*Some TS Lodges, especially those which are in theosophically remote areas, tend to center their work on whatever their own small membership finds interesting. Lodges and*

***"True progress involves insight, real perception, and awareness of right and wrong from a loftier, far reaching standpoint. Only by the acquisition of wisdom can an ultimate answer be given. Meanwhile, individuals must struggle to learn what is right and wrong by a process of meeting, studying, making mistakes, pondering and discussing. Members of the TS can help in this process because they have the invaluable background of Theosophical study and the Theosophical world view. The Theosophical Society itself has as its function only to provide the opportunities and means for people to reach a state of Wisdom."***

**Radha Burnier**, *The World Around Us*

*groups within our Society do have the freedom to work on themes of particular interest to them, and carry on activities which are to their liking, but the freedom must be exercised within the framework of the Society's character and structure. Were each unit to function without regard to the whole, the Society would not exist as a worldwide body, a globally spread family of harmoniously minded members."*

Radha Burnier, *On the Watch-Tower*, from *The Theosophist*, July 1996 issue.

However, functioning without regard to the whole occurs repeatedly because of unclear boundaries as to 'the framework of the Society's character and structure' and Theosophical groups are led into diversions of their members own making with the potential for dissention and disharmony being, all too often, the consequence. It is hardly the case that all the evidence of theosophical history shows that the TS has rarely been a family of harmoniously minded members'.

Miraculously the so-called TS survives and continues to exist as a worldwide body. However, to what extent this is due to the Society itself or to the supporting effect of the more defined boundaries of independent parts of the Theosophical Movement is unclear (the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT), for example, has a prominent, straightforward, one sentence Aim at the head of its web pages). The TS, meanwhile, has seen Lodges drift into Magic, neo Paganism, Spiritualism, 'Mind-Body-Spirit', over-diluted Buddhism, solipsism (egoistic self-absorption), or other forms of New-Age self-preoccupation and 'self-culture'.[7] Members do not always recognize deviation from Theosophy, or recognize the un-Theosophical self-gratification inherent in repeating unqualified assertions such as *'I myself am Ruler of the Universe'*, (Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles*), '[I am] *the Truth*' (Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*), or seeing the Universe as a personal shopping catalogue: '*Make room to receive your desires*' (Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*), and so on. Given that each has – at some time – featured in Theosophical Lodges, one must wonder at the first-time encounters of aspiring Theosophical newcomers – can they expect 'the genuine doctrines of the Wisdom-Religion'? And if their search is for genuine doctrines, can they expect 'much help from mutual aid and sympathy'? Is it even possible for the 'real programme' to be carried out in such circumstances?

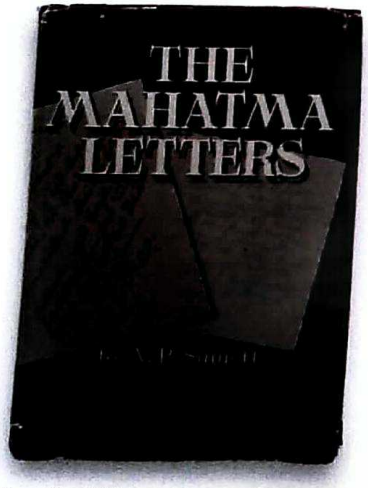
A lack of clarity allows for the dissemination of surrogate or pseudo Aims; not necessarily bad or negative ones, but different Aims, self-devised or 'self-culture' Aims, or Aims affected by accretions, contemporary influences, 'Chinese whispers', or innumerable causes of drift from the eternal truths.

It is a sad irony that the TS does not give prominence to comprehensive Objects, for those aims found within the literature are as pioneering, noble, and far reaching as it is possible to imagine. Though initially sparking interest in phenomena and their underlying natural laws, the Society emphasized Universal Brotherhood and clearly established the metaphysical basis of this unity in Universal Law. A published circular of 1878 set out various points related to the Society's

purpose and concluded by saying:
*'... finally, and chiefly, to aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity, wherein all good and pure men, of every race, shall recognize each other as the equal effects (upon this planet) of one Uncreated, Universal, Infinite, and Everlasting Cause.'*

New York Circular drafted mainly by Colonel H. S. Olcott, 1878, in H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 375.

Readers of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* will have observed the early development of this Aim, for example:
*'The chief object of the TS is not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men ...* [Letter 2, p. 8.] *The Chiefs want a Brotherhood of Humanity, a real Universal Fraternity, started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds.'*




*A mid-20th century edition of The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett.*

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett in chronological sequence*, Letter 12, p. 39.

Not merely postulating a basis for mutual feelings of good will or community, these early teachings cannot be accurately p[illegible] by contemporary s[illegible] bites such as 'all yo[illegible] Universal or othe[illegible] instead, a vitally [illegible] ontological basis [illegible] founded upon an [illegible] the One Life in wh[illegible] impact each other [illegible] which the Theosoph[illegible] are centred.

H. P. Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosop[illegible]* remains one of the clearest expositions of th[illegible] eaning of both Theosophy and of 'the real p[illegible] ramme' of the Society itself. Therein she argu[illegible] hat Theosophy can demonstrate Brother[illegible] d on *'logical, philosophical, metaphysical, and even scientific grounds'* and in the following section set out the important, and oft quoted, aim that:
*'It* [The Society] *was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by [illegible] assimilating its eternal verities.'*

[illegible] *The Key to Theosophy*, 1889, p. 57.

It should be noted that whereas a purpose of such *'studying and assimilating'* is not only the potential *'spiritual growth of every individual who comes within its influence'*[8] it also serves the higher and altruistic aim of *'the relief of human suffering'*.[9]

*'The truths and mysteries of occultism constitute a body of the highest spiritual importance ... given ... for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.'*

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett in chronological sequence*, Letter 12, p. 38.

The Founders, however, never envisaged the TS as a social or charitable organization, and HPB stressed the moral, rather than physical, nature of its aims:
*'Its aims are several; but the most important of all are those which are likely to lead to the relief of human suffering under any or every form, moral as well as physical. And we believe the former to be far more important than the latter.'*

[illegible]sky, *The Key to Theosophy*. 1889, p. 24.

(This theme is further, and thoughtfully, explored by B.P. Wadia in his lecture transcripts *Growth Through Service*).

The Theosophist selflessly living his or her own spiritual life can morally best serve the world. As HPB says: *'It is an occult law that no man can rise superior to his individual failings without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part.'*[10] Thus, we may see that the TS has a magnificent and noble purpose not only to make Theosophy known, but to act as the locus for non-egoistic individuals (those having developed the same *'magnetic bond of fraternal unity'*) who strive in their spiritual and moral development with an ultimate goal being the interests of humankind.

As one of the Aims of the TS is to make Theosophy known, we should clearly say so. As the dissemination and study of Theosophy has the aim of assisting in the spiritual and moral progress of humanity let us say that, too. It is vital that proper emphasis be given to the Aims (or Objects) in the coherently Theosophical context. We should display this clearly on all literature, web pages, and so forth. Let us stop hiding our light under a bushel, or worse still, allow dimmer alternatives to obscure our great purpose. ✣

*The Theosophical Society – Finding its Aim?* was originally published in *The Theosophist* March 2015.

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***Robert Kitto** is a long standing member of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) in the United Kingdom. He was a Lodge President and in 2002 became a Trustee of The Blavatsky Trust.*

## Notes

1. The first such document was an 1878 Circular drafted mainly by H. S. Olcott, *The Theosophical Society Its Origin, Plan and Aims.* This is also published in HPB's *Collected Writings*, vol. 1 p. 375-378.
2. H. P. Blavatsky, *Original Programme* letter from Ostend, 1886. *Collected Writings*, vol. 7 p. 145-171.
3. The Theosophical Society, having its headquarters at Pasadena, USA, has five published objects.
4. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett in chronological sequence*, Letter 10, p. 27. Further explanatory statements are to be found in HPB's *The Key to Theosophy* (p. 18, pp. 40-47, etc.
5. Ianthe Hoskins, *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, p. 61 *Bowen Notes: The Secret Doctrine and Its Study.*
6. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett in chronological sequence*, Letter 12.
7. HPB contrasted 'self culture' to 'mutual culture' in the *Original Programme* letter, *Collected Writings*, vol. 7 p. 160.
8. H. P. Blavatsky article *Spiritual Progress* in *The Theosophist*, May 1885, also in *Collected Writings*, vol. 6, p 331.
9. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 1889 ed., p. 24.
10. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 1889 ed., p. 203.

# Extracts from 'The Theosophical Movement After H.P. Blavatsky'

*Regarding the question of original or pseudo-theosophy.*

In today's computerised world, social media is used on a daily basis for everything from shopping and reading to communicating with each other. Social networking using websites such as Facebook attracts the attention of millions of people across the globe. In recent years, we have seen an increasing debate on the subject of theosophy versus pseudo-theosophy. Sadly, many of the advocates of pseudo-theosophy have little or no experience or understanding of original theosophy. It is largely due to this that such people mistake the false versions to be the true teachings. When confronted with the facts about original theosophical teachings, as given out by the Trans-Himalayan Masters through their co-worker HP Blavatsky, and how the false teachings have come about, many are shocked and, in some cases, feel cheated.

It is from this perspective and a desire to make a small start in assuring that our members have the benefit of the facts, that this article has been put together. We hope that interested readers will 'do the research' and take advantage of the wealth of completely reliable information on this matter: thereby following HPB's request to uncover what is real theosophy and what is just masquerading under that sacred name.
(Ed).

The story of the Theosophical Movement after the passing of H.P. Blavatsky – HPB – is to a large extent a very sad and tragic one.

It takes a certain amount of humility, a real sacrificing of what has been called "the personal idea," for one to be truly content and satisfied to remain as a mere transmitter and "hander on" of a Teaching which has already been given out. Within the hearts of many lurks the desire to be looked upon as a great leader, to be viewed as a Teacher in their own right, and to be admired and revered as a new "Messenger" for "new teachings" from the Masters.

This, combined with the constant childish longing of the masses for "fresh revelations" and the "latest messages," especially when they have not even bothered to make proper use of the huge mass of teaching and information already available, has resulted in considerable damage and tremendous harm for both the Theosophical Movement and the world of spirituality in general.

Early in the twentieth century, a new form of theosophy sprung up, derived almost exclusively from the self-proclaimed clairvoyant revelations and discoveries of an English Theosophist named C.W. Leadbeater, who A. Besant, succeeding Olcott as president of the Society, had chosen to be her close colleague and spiritual guide.

Together, while passing themselves off as being so much greater, wiser, and better than HPB, they proceeded to completely rewrite the teachings of theosophy and present in their place an entirely different and incompatible system, whilst deliberately pushing HPB and her legacy well into the background. HPB had written and warned against what she described as "pseudo-theosophy," and the version of theosophy promulgated by Besant, Leadbeater, and their adherents, including A.A. Bailey, was certainly this! The third and "revised edition" of *The Secret Doctrine* was found to contain around 40,000 alterations.

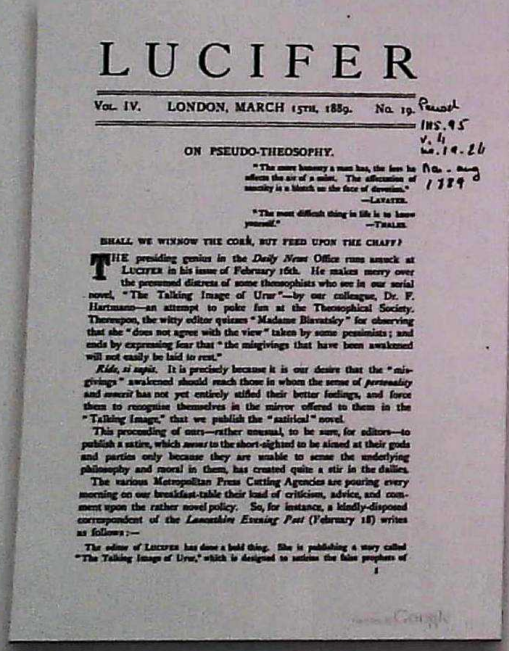
When faced, as they quite often unavoidably were, with the glaring fact of the Adyar Society's version of theosophy being so entirely different from that of HPB, Leadbeater and Besant calmly assured enquirers that they knew and understood the Masters far better and more accurately than HPB had ever done and that her works were filled with major mistakes and serious errors and thus not worth even bothering with.

Alice Bailey, a former Christian missionary, was a member of the Adyar Society and an admirer of Leadbeater and Besant. She distanced herself outwardly from the Theosophical Movement and formed her own organisation in order to promulgate teachings

*Left to right:* Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1934); Annie Besant (1847-1933); and Alice Ann Bailey (1880-1949).

she had purportedly received from one of the Masters but which are in fact largely derived from and based on the teachings and self-proclaimed clairvoyant discoveries of Leadbeater.

HPB wrote an article titled *On Pseudo-theosophy* (a term which many Theosophists do not like, even though HPB coined it, wrote about it, and in so doing authorised its use) in which she describes it as the duty of all serious students of theosophy, and especially the more esoterically minded and committed, to expose and unmask *"the false prophets of theosophy"* and the distortions they may wreak upon the original Theosophical teachings and principles.



LUCIFER

Vol. IV. LONDON, MARCH 15TH, 1889. No. 19.

ON PSEUDO-THEOSOPHY.

"The surest honesty a man has, the law in effects the act of a saint. The affectation of sanctity is a blotch on the face of devotion."
—LAVATER.

"The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself."
—THALES.

SHALL WE WINNOW THE CORN, BUT FEED UPON THE CHAFF?

THE presiding genius in the *Daily News* Office runs amuck at LUCIFER in his issue of February 16th. He makes merry over the presumed distress of some theosophists who see in our serial novel, "The Talking Image of Urur"—by our colleague, Dr. F. Hartmann—an attempt to poke fun at the Theosophical Society. Thereupon, the witty editor quizzes "Madame Blavatsky" for observing that she "does not agree with the view" taken by some pessimists; and ends by expressing fear that "the misgivings that have been awakened will not easily be laid to rest."

*Ride, si sapis.* It is precisely because it is our desire that the "misgivings" awakened should reach those in whom the sense of *personality* and *ownership* has not yet entirely stifled their better feelings, and force them to recognise themselves in the mirror offered to them in the "Talking Image," that we publish the "satirical" novel.

This proceeding of ours—rather unusual, to be sure, for editors—to publish a satire, which *seems* to the short-sighted to be aimed at their gods and parties only because they are unable to sense the underlying philosophy and moral in them, has created quite a stir in the dailies. The various Metropolitan Press Cutting Agencies are pouring every morning on our breakfast-table their load of criticism, advice, and comment upon the rather novel policy. So, for instance, a kindly-disposed correspondent of the *Lancashire Evening Post* (February 18) writes as follows:—

The editor of LUCIFER has done a bold thing. She is publishing a story called "The Talking Image of Urur," which is designed to satirise the false prophets of

The March 1889 issue of *Lucifer*, edited by H. P. Blavatsky, in which the article *'On Pseudo-theosophy'* appeared. *(From an original document, digitized by Google).*

In her article she said that the real would soon be confused with the false unless at least some Theosophists would engage in the uncomfortable, unpopular, but unfortunately very necessary work of showing to the world what is real theosophy and what is just masquerading under that sacred name.

Granted, differences in human character and personality mean that not all of us will feel personally suited and inclined towards such a task and activity as that but, unfortunately, someone has to do it and, in that article, and elsewhere HPB clearly endorses and requests the doing of it.

Despite presenting her teachings as a "continuation" or even a conclusion of those of Blavatsky, Bailey's books instead contradict the work and teachings of Blavatsky at almost every turn and on almost every subject and substitute Blavatsky's pure Eastern Esoteric Philosophy with a distinctly Christianised and Westernised system. ✻

Not all of the article has been printed here because it is far too long and covers far more than is required to bring this matter to the attention of members.

The full article can be read at:
*https://blavatskytheosophy.com/the-theosophical-movement-after-h-p-blavatsky/*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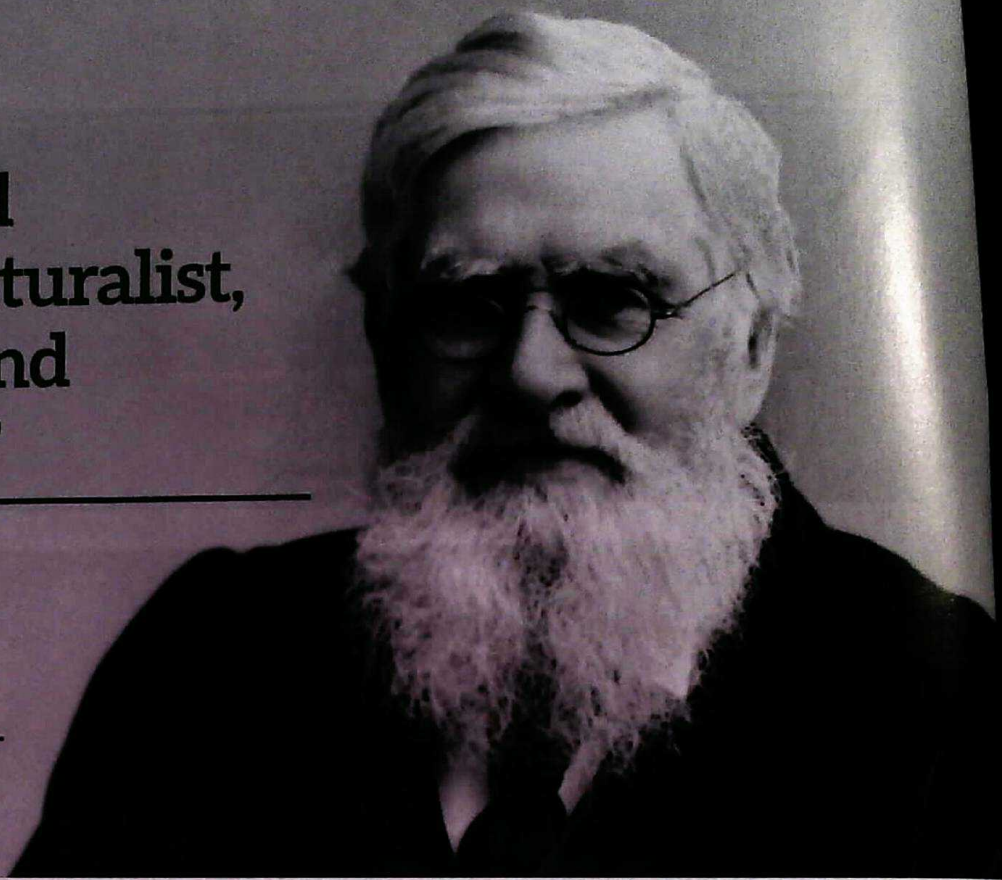
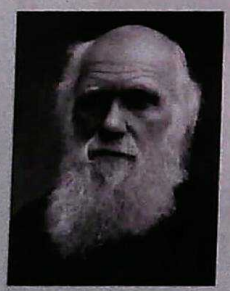
# Alfred Russel Wallace – Naturalist, Spiritualist and Theosophist?

By **Colyn Boyce**





Charles Darwin (1809-1882)

One of England's greatest scientists, A. R. Wallace was born on the 8th of January – 200 years ago, in Llanbadoc, Monmouthshire, Wales. He was a man of many talents - naturalist, explorer, geographer, anthropologist, biologist, illustrator and social commentator. He is famous for simultaneously having formulated with Charles Darwin, a theory about the origin of species by natural selection.

He was awarded in 1868, the Royal Society's prestigious Royal Medal and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1893. In 1908, he received the Copley Metal and Order of Merit.

Wallace was a prolific author, having published 22 full-length books and at least 747 shorter pieces, 508 of which were scientific papers (191 of them published in *Nature*).

Of the remaining shorter pieces 29% were on biogeography and natural history, 27% were on evolutionary theory, 25% were social commentary, 12% were on anthropology, and 7% were on spiritualism and phrenology.

Wallace's most important work – published in 1870 – was *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*. In this tome, we read of how he differed from Darwin on the theme of 'natural selection', contending that unlike other 'animals', the appearance of

mankind was to a certain extent, the result of some non-physical causes. Wallace maintained that natural selection could not account for mathematical, artistic, or musical genius, metaphysical musings, or wit and humour.

He was had an abiding interest in spiritualism and other psychic phenomena, which was developed some years before his investigations on 'natural selection'. In 1875, he published *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* in which he outlined the rationale for his beliefs. He expanded the teachings of spiritualism in a number of later writings, excerpts which are reproduced below.

An early edition of Wallace's *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism.*

*"...The universal teaching of modern spiritualism is that the world and the whole material universe exist for the purpose of developing spiritual beings--that death is simply a transition from material existence to the first grade of spirit-life--and that our happiness and the degree of our progress will be wholly dependent upon the use we have made of our faculties and opportunities here..."*

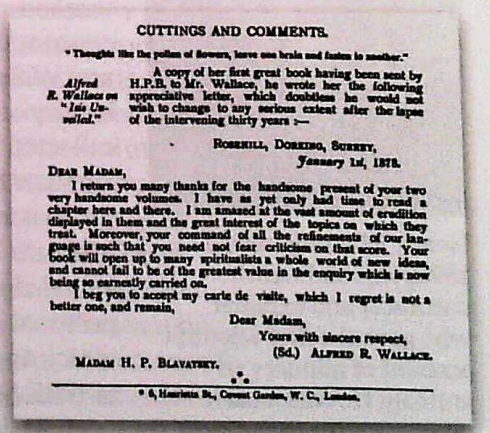
*"...our condition and happiness in the future life depends, by the action of strictly natural law, on our life and conduct here. There is no reward or punishment meted out to us by superior beings; but, just as surely as cleanliness and exercise and wholesome food produce health of body, so surely does a moral life here produce health and happiness in the spirit-world..."*

As Charles Smith contends in his 1992 paper, *Alfred Russel Wallace on Spiritualism*, *Man and Evolution*, Wallace did not view his adoption of spiritualism as a retreat from natural selection; rather, he considered *"spiritualism the best available accounting of the overall direction of evolution at the moral/intellectual level"*, and endorsed it accordingly.

In 1876, Wallace joined the Theosophical Society. Henry Steel Olcott, the first President of the Theosophical Society, was in correspondence with Wallace and sent him a copy of his book, *People from the Other Worlds* (1875).

Olcott's fellow co-founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, also sent Wallace a copy of her recent publication, *Isis Unveiled*, and in 1878 received the following reply: *"Dear Madam, I return you many thanks for the handsome present of your two very handsome volumes ... I am amazed at the vast amount of erudition displayed in them and the great interest of the topics on which they treat ... Your book will open up to many spiritualists a whole world of new ideas, and cannot fail to be of the greatest value in the enquiry which is now being so earnestly carried on ... Yours with sincere respect, [signed] Alfred R. Wallace"*

Printed in the Adyar *Theosophist* 7: 27 [April 1906]: 559.



CUTTINGS AND COMMENTS.

"Thoughts like the pollen of flowers, leave one brain and fasten in another."

*Alfred R. Wallace on "Isis Unveiled."*

A copy of her first great book having been sent by H.P.B. to Mr. Wallace, he wrote her the following appreciative letter, which doubtless he would not wish to change to any serious extent after the lapse of the intervening thirty years :—

ROSEHILL, DORKING, SURREY,
*January 1st*, 1878.

DEAR MADAM,

I return you many thanks for the handsome present of your two very handsome volumes. I have as yet only had time to read a chapter here and there. I am amazed at the vast amount of erudition displayed in them and the great interest of the topics on which they treat. Moreover, your command of all the refinements of our language is such that you need not fear criticism on that score. Your book will open up to many spiritualists a whole world of new ideas, and cannot fail to be of the greatest value in the enquiry which is now being so earnestly carried on.

I beg you to accept my carte de visite, which I regret is not a better one, and remain,

Dear Madam,
Yours with sincere respect,
(Sd.) ALFRED R. WALLACE.

MADAM H. P. BLAVATSKY.

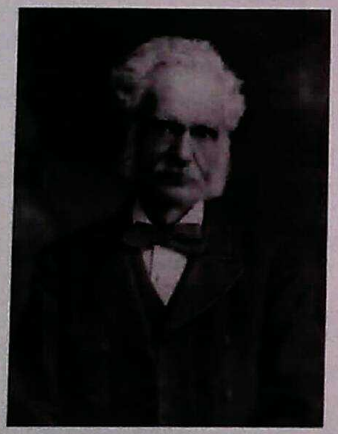
* 6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, W. C., London.

Wallace's letter to H. P. Blavatsky, as published in *The Theosophist* in April 1906.

Alfred Russel Wallace was the eighth of nine children born to Mary Anne Wallace and Thomas Vere Wallace. His mother was English, while his father was of Scottish ancestry and claimed a connection to William Wallace – the leader of Scottish forces during the 13th-century Wars of Scottish Independence.

When Alfred was five years old, his family moved to Hertford. There he attended Hertford Grammar School until 1837, then moved to London where he boarded with his older brother, John, who was an apprentice builder.

While in the nation's capital, Alfred attended the London Mechanics Institute where he was exposed to the radical political ideas of Robert Owen, the Welsh social reformer and Thomas Paine, the English-born political theorist.



Henry Walter Bates (1825-1892), was an English naturalist and explorer who gave the first scientific account of mimicry in animals. He was most famous for his expedition to the rainforests of the Amazon with Alfred Russel Wallace, starting in 1848.

Between 1840 and 1843, Wallace worked as a land surveyor in the countryside of the west of England and Wales. Quite taken by the beauty of his surroundings he collected flowers and plants as an amateur botanist from1841.

In late 1843, Wallace composed a lecture *The advantages of varied knowledge* in which he set out his personal philosophy, extracts of which appear in his autobiography of 1905, *My Life.*

*"...He who has extended his inquiries into the varied phenomena of nature learns to despise no fact, however small, and to consider the most apparently insignificant and common occurrences as much in need of explanation as those of a grander and more imposing character. He sees in every dewdrop trembling on the grass causes at work analogous to those which have produced the spherical figure of the earth and planets; and in the beautiful forms of crystallization on his window panes on a frosty morning he recognizes the action of laws which may also have a part in the production of the similar forms of planets and of many of the lower animal types. Thus, the simplest facts of everyday life have to him an inner meaning, and he sees that they depend upon the same general laws as those that are at work in the grandest phenomena of nature..."*

Wallace's father died in 1843 and a decline in demand for surveying led to temporary unemployment for Wallace but in 1844 he was working in Leicester at the Collegiate School where he taught technical drawing, mapmaking, and surveying.

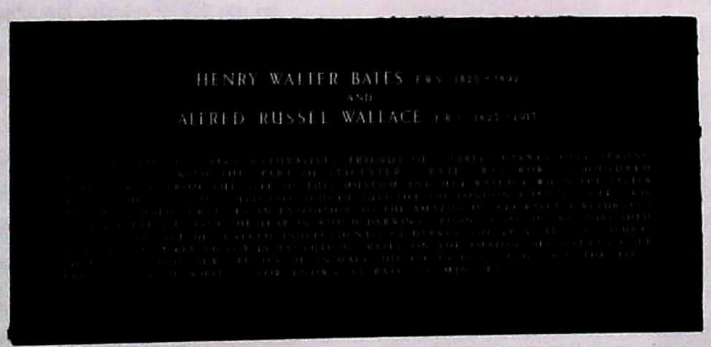
It was also here in Leicester, that Wallace attended a lecture by Spencer Hall on hypnosis, then known as mesmerism. Wallace then experimented and managed to hypnotise some of his students. As a result, Wallace concluded there was a link between his experiences with mesmerism and spiritualism. But it was not for another 20 years later, that Wallace devoted his full energies to investigating spiritualism.

He was a regular visitor to the town library, where he read such progressive writings as *An Essay on the Principle of Population* by Thomas Robert Malthus, (A) *Personal Narrative* by Alexander von Humboldt, and Charles Darwin's *Journal*, the

latter which recounted *'The Voyage of the Beagle'*. One evening Wallace met Henry Bates, the entomologist, who at just 19 years old, had published in the journal *Zoologist*, an 1843 paper on beetles. He befriended Wallace and encouraged him to collect insects.

Bates and Wallace undertook extensive fieldwork, in the Amazon River basin, beginning in 1848. From 1854 to 1862, he travelled through the Malay Archipelago, where he identified the faunal divide (now called 'the Wallace Line') which separates the Indonesian archipelago into a western portion in which the animals are largely of Asian origin, and an eastern portion where the fauna display Australasian characteristics.

In 1849, Leicester opened one of the first public museums in the UK. The collection was originally formed by the Literary and Philosophical Society. Renamed in 2020 as the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, it contains displays of science, history and art, both international and local.



Plaque outside Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

Just outside the entrance of the building is a plaque outlining the strong associations of Wallace and Bates with this part of Leicester – Bates having been born just 100 yards away from the museum.

Following his return from Malaya, in 1865, Wallace began serious studies of spiritualism, possibly at the behest of his sister Fanny Sims. He became a regular attendee at séances, and for the rest of his life, he remained convinced that at least some séance phenomena were genuine, despite accusations of fraud and evidence of trickery.

In 1874, Wallace visited the spirit photographer Frederick Hudson. He asserted that a photograph of him with his deceased mother, taken by Hudson, was genuine, although previous photographs by Hudson had been exposed as fraudulent two years earlier. His relationships with Henry Bates, Thomas Huxley and even Darwin, were permanently strained as a result.

Wallace's scientific reputation took a battering as a result of his public advocacy of spiritualism and repeated defence of spiritualist mediums in the face of allegations of fraud in the 1870s.

Sometimes called the "*father of biogeography*" (or more accurately of '*zoogeography*'), Wallace is often considered the 19th century's leading expert on the geographical distribution of animal species.

Through his extensive work in biogeography, he became all too aware of the impact of human activities on the natural world. In *Tropical Nature and Other Essays* (1878), he warned about the dangers of deforestation and soil erosion, especially in tropical climates prone to heavy rainfall. He

outlined the dangers that extensive clearing of rainforest for coffee cultivation in Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) and India would have on the climate in those countries as it would lead to impoverishment caused by soil erosion.

Far from mellowing with age, Wallace's comments on the environment grew more urgent later in his career. In *The World of Life* (1911) he wrote that people should view nature *"as invested with a certain sanctity, to be used by us but not abused, and never to be recklessly destroyed or defaced."*

It wasn't just on planet Earth that Wallace focused his scientific mind. In his 1904 book, *Man's Place in the Universe*, he seriously evaluated the likelihood of life on other planets. Along with his fellow theosophist, the astronomer Camille Flammarion, he was one of the first scientists to write comprehensively on the possibility of life on Mars.

Wallace was elected in 1881 as the first president of the newly formed Land Nationalisation Society and the next year, he published a book, *Land Nationalisation; Its Necessity and Its Aims*. He was a staunch supporter of progressive land reformist Henry George, and described his best-selling book, *Progress and Poverty* as *"Undoubtedly the most remarkable and important book of the present century"*.

*Above left:* Nicolas Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), was a French astronomer and author; *above right:* Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), was an American author, journalist, and political activist most famous for his utopian novel *Looking Backward*.

In 1889, after reading the utopian novel *Looking Backward*, written by Edward Bellamy, Wallace declared himself a socialist. He was ardently opposed to eugenics, an idea which found favour with a number of other prominent 19th-century evolutionary thinkers. He argued that contemporary society was too corrupt and unjust to allow any reasonable determination of who was fit or unfit. In his 1890 article *Human Selection* he wrote, *"Those who succeed in the race for wealth are by no means the best or the most intelligent ..."*

Other social and political topics on which Wallace wrote included articles to support women's suffrage and to alert the public to the immorality and wastefulness of militarism.

In an 1899 essay, he stated: *"that all modern wars are dynastic; that they are caused by the ambition, the interests, the jealousies, and the insatiable greed of power of their rulers, or of the great mercantile and financial classes which have power and influence over their rulers; and that the results of war are never good for the people, who yet bear all its burdens"*.

Through his writings, Wallace became well known both as a scientist and social activist and was regularly quoted in the press. In addition to the many awards he received, mentioned at the outset of this article, Wallace held many prestigious posts – being elected president of the anthropology section of the British Association in 1866, and of the Entomological Society of London in 1870. In 1873, he was elected to the American

Philosophical Society.

However, his fame quickly faded upon his death and he became an obscure figure in the history of science. But, since 2000, he has again become better known, thanks largely to five book-length biographies and two anthologies. Western Kentucky University maintains a web page dedicated to the Wallace scholarship.

London's Natural History Museum, co-ordinated worldwide events to commemorate the Wallace centenary in 2013. A portrait of Wallace was unveiled in the Main Hall of the Museum and Sir David Attenborough unveiled a statue of Wallace at the museum on 7 November – the 100th anniversary of his death.

Mount Wallace, in California's Sierra Nevada mountain range, was named in his honour in 1895. Impact craters on Mars and the Moon are named after him. A group of islands is known as the Wallacea biographical region, in the naturalist's honour and several hundred species of plants and animals, both living and fossil, have been named after Wallace.

We close with the following words taken from Wallace's essay – *Advantages*, written as a twenty-year-old, which distil the essence of his belief in the connection between justice and natural causality, and it is this connection that represents the cornerstone of his entire life's work.

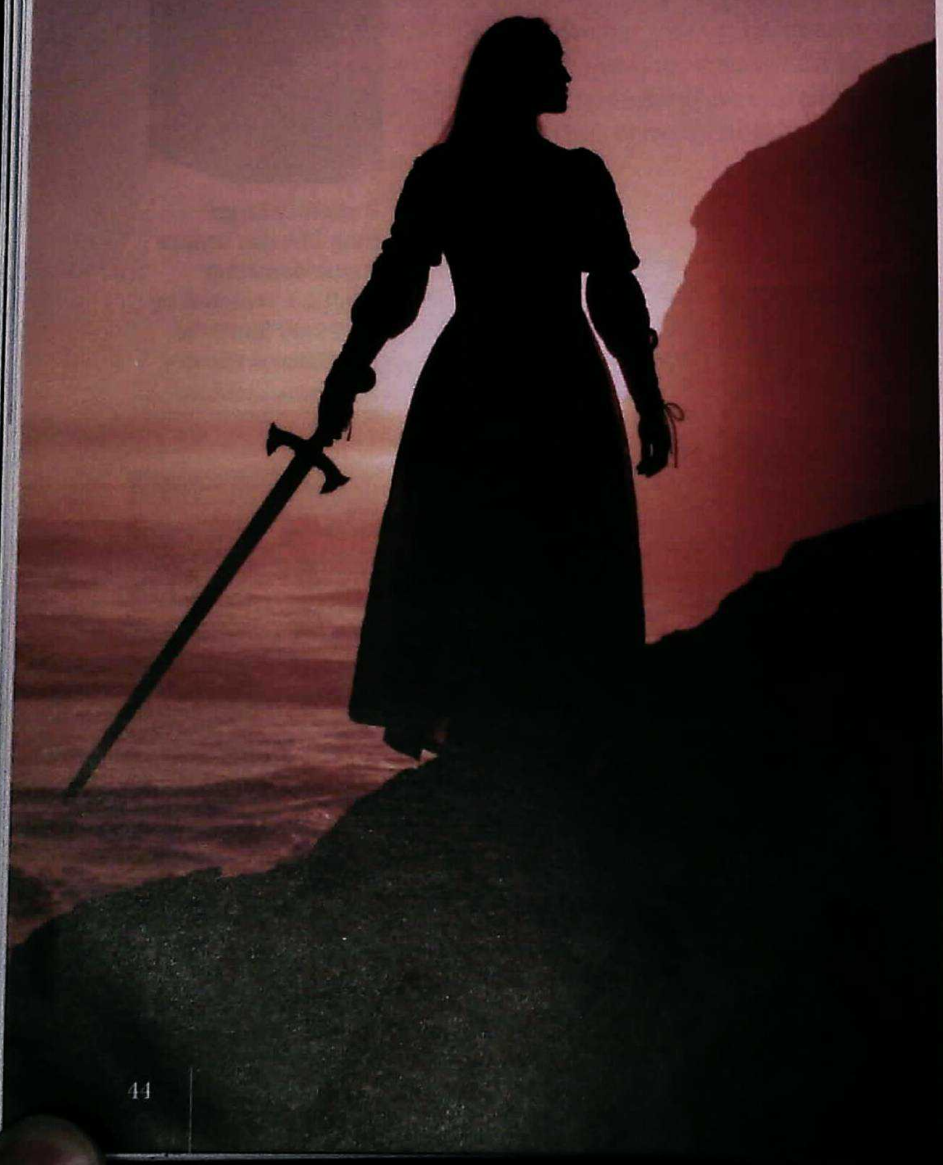
*"...Can we believe that we are fulfilling the purpose of our existence while so many of the wonders and beauties of the creation remain unnoticed around us? While so much of the mystery which man has been able to penetrate, however imperfectly, is still all dark to us? While so many of the laws which govern the universe and which influence our lives are, by us, unknown and uncared for? And this not because we want the power, but the will, to acquaint ourselves with them. Can we think it right that, with the key to so much that we ought to know, and that we should be the better for knowing,*
*in our possession, we seek not to open the door, but allow this great store of mental wealth to lie unused, producing no return to us, while our highest powers and capacities rust for want*
*of use?..."* ❊

**Colyn Boyce** *was born in Canada and in the 1970s he was a radio journalist. A member of the Theosophical Society since 1969, he worked for the London HQ of the TS in England from 1981 to 2018. For 25 years he was engaged full-time as Publicist and for the latter 10 years, he held the post of Office Administrator with a remit to organise and promote the London programme of the Society. From 1990 to 2015 he was Assistant Editor of* Insight *magazine and its predecessor,* The Theosophical Journal. *A member of the National Lecturers Scheme, Colyn has spoken at English Summer Schools, in London and at a number of premises throughout the UK, Canada and the USA. He also contributes articles regularly to esoteric magazines.*

A slightly larger than life-size bronze statue depicting Wallace, sculpted by Anthony Smith, at the Natural History Museum, London.

# The Quest for Meaning

By **Joy Mills**

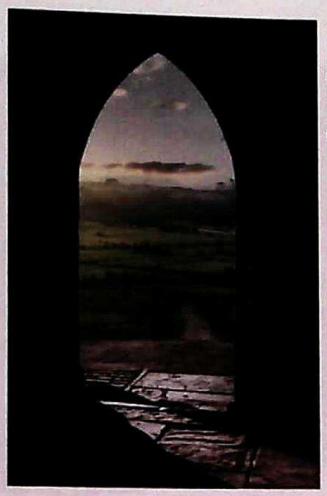


No cry is more plaintive or more persistent, no cry more heart-rending or difficult to answer than the simple plea, *'Why?'* Even as children beginning the exploration of the world about us, we seek to know why things are as they are: why is water wet? Why does fire burn? Why do trees grow upwards and not down? An endless series of questions each one beginning with 'Why?' marks our entry into awareness of ourselves and our world, of people, events and things.

Growth from childhood into maturity only changes the object of our inquiry; the question remains essentially the same. We demand meaning, not simply a knowledge of how things operate or what things are, and this imperative demand for meaning pushes us relentlessly forward to explore the unknown territory of life itself. For all the 'whys' we have asked – why did this happen to me? Why did my friend have to die? Why is there so much injustice in the world? – all the 'whys' we can ever ask, are finally resolved into one imperious question: *'What is the meaning of life?'*

That question, forged in the fires of our suffering and our heart-ache, of our pains and struggles, shaped by our expectations, aspirations and dreams, leads us forth on a most singular adventure after understanding – an adventure towards wisdom and enlightenment, towards the kind of experience that is genuinely numinous in its transformative character because it enables us at the end of our quest to say, *'I know.'*

The journey of life is essentially the quest


Rowan Freeman

for meaning and the experience of meaning seems granted to us only in becoming conscious of new knowledge. So it is that the metaphysical task of man lies in a continual expansion of consciousness, and our destiny, as individuals, is to push outwards the boundaries of self-awareness even when the process involves pain and suffering or demands a ruthless and honest confrontation with ourselves. According to Carl Jung, *'Because of the self's drive toward realization, life appears as a task of the highest order, and therein lies the possibility of interpreting its meaning, which does not exclude the possibility of defeat.'* For even when we momentarily fail in the quest – and failure is only temporary so long as we do not cease the quest – our very defeat marks a further advance on the road to full self-awareness and self-realization.

For Jung, the meaning of life lay in the realization of the self, by which he meant the realization of the divine in man. Perhaps that, after all, may be the best, or at least the easiest, way in which to express the end of the quest for it sums up all the religious traditions, while at the same time, it points to the fact that the journey and the goal lie in the here and now of everyday existence.

## The Heroic Journey

In the words of *The Secret Doctrine*, the quest for meaning is *'the martyrdom of self-conscious existence'*, in which we must, by our own efforts, win through to our immortality, achieving the goal of Self-realization while in incarnation. This is no easy task and consequently, it has always been depicted in myth and legend, in scripture and in sacred literature, as a heroic journey in which every man is the hero of his own story, however unheroic he may appear to himself or to others.

The retellings of the ancient tale of man's quest for meaning are so numerous that one can turn to any culture or any tradition and find some version of the epic. Yet we continue to search, and today the search has seemed to take on a certain desperation for we feel that the world, as we have known it, is rapidly crumbling while the threat of a nuclear holocaust is ever more imminent (1981). As a consequence of our desperation, we feel there must be shortcuts to our goal, that almost anyone who promises to endow existence with meaning must be on the right track and that all we need to do is to follow blindly. Unfortunately, the psychic and spiritual wrecks which strew the paths that are thus taken do not always seem sufficient warning to the newer questioner. Perhaps it would be well to heed the words of the well-known mountain climber, Edward Whymper: *'Climb if you will but remember that courage and strength are naught without prudence and that momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing*

Inspire Toud

*in haste: look well to each step, and from the beginning think what may be the end.'*

Every chronicle depicting the age-old search gives the same advice, and nowhere in the Western tradition has the lesson been presented with greater urgency or more convincing example than in the numerous retellings of the quest for the Holy Grail. The power and beauty of the Grail legends, intertwined as many of them are with the Arthurian stories, still stir the hearts and minds of many whose normal, mundane lives appear dreary and fruitless.

## Quest For the Grail

Somewhere, we feel, Camelot and Avalon must exist; someday, we hope, all humanity will sit together at the Table Round, in peace and harmony of purpose. These very words, conjuring up dreams of a time and a place when a Golden Age will dawn again, break through the hard empirical crust of our vaunted rational minds to awaken within us the possibility of another kind of existence, a life lived more fully, more meaningfully, more richly, and we are drawn outwards, as was Parsifal, from the forest of our knowing to seek the *'King who can make knights'*, and to find the Castle of the Grail.

*Isabella Struck*

For the Grail itself symbolizes meaning, that vessel which is the container of wisdom, for which men seek throughout the world, and the quest for meaning, then, is the search for the Grail. The *'King who can make knights'*, whom Parsifal first set out to find, is the Immortal Atman – the One Self – as well as the Great Initiator who, once seen, forever after claims our allegiance. So every man begins the journey as did Parsifal the simple fool, naive, unknowing, pure. Along the way he meets with every temptation, disguised as dragon, giant, demon and witch, or as fire, water, earth and air; he is befriended by a lovely maiden or wise old man; he experiences the terrors of the night of despair and at dawn, he glimpses anew the vision of his own certain triumph. At the end of the journey he enters the heavenly city, the Castle of the Grail. There he perceives the unveiled light, the holy wisdom, and thus becomes an enlightened one, a saviour of the world.

In the Galahad version of the Grail legend, one hundred and fifty knights undertook the quest but only three were blessed with Galahad's continued presence, and Galahad alone – the perfect knight, the truly initiated one – is judged worthy to see the mysteries within the holy vessel and to look on the ineffable. Students of theosophical literature will recognize here a multiplicity of symbols: Galahad and the three who accompany him to the journey's end are perhaps the four Kumaras, bringing light, intelligence and wisdom to a new cycle in the evolutionary process; Galahad, the avatar promised in so many traditions as coming when there is *'decay of righteousness'* and when the world faces a new crisis of the spirit; Galahad and his companions overcoming every trial and

*The Attainment* or *The Achievement of the Grail*, tapestry version woven 1895-96, with overall composition and figures designed by Edward Burne-Jones.

difficulty to join the ranks of those *'just men made perfect'* who are the Brotherhood of Adepts, the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion.

## Arthurian Symbols

Basic to the story of the Grail quest is the magnificent concept that there exists a mystery race of King Adepts who take incarnation periodically in order to aid mankind in its long journey toward the sacred place where meaning is discovered. So it is said that, just as every Mason learns to direct his steps from West to East, the Adept-Kings of the mysterious Grail race journeyed eastward with the Grail. But, from time to time, one or another of that mystery-race may journey Westward with the Grail of Wisdom to awaken in men a knowledge of their forgotten birthright. Such, indeed, was the case when the Theosophical Society was founded, and through it is given the ageless wisdom which alone imparts meaning to existence. It testifies to the fact that there is a Path to the Castle of the Grail and that the stages on the way are as clearly marked today as they ever were, and it sounds the warning that the travelling demands nothing less than all we have and are. The brave in heart, willing to walk that way, must say as did Parsifal, *'Go I will, cost what it may.'*

Let us, then, examine this eternal quest, using some features of the Grail legends to serve as guides along the way. Every archetypal symbol of these legends lies within man himself: the Waste Land is the field of personal incarnation when the 'King' or Atman is 'wounded' because of our non-recognition of his existence; the Sword is a symbol of Manas; the Lance, a symbol of the intuitive, direct perception – these are all elements of our own nature, symbolic of faculties to be awakened or aspects of ourselves to be experienced and made

conscious. Each participant in the drama of the Grail quest, whether called Parsifal or Merlin, Guinevere or Gawain, is within us now, for, as the American Poet Walt Whitman once wrote, we *'contain multitudes'*. As we read the legend, we may see ourselves as Bors the plodder, subject to the temptations of the intellect, faced with a moral dilemma, the choice between conflicting duties, and yet able to make a reasoned decision to continue on the quest. Or we may find in ourselves the figure of Lancelot, needing continuous help, stumbling again and again on the way through the valley of humiliation, the dead weight of our past dragging us down, and yet ever full of good intentions to reform.

Or we may be Gawain, brave, magnanimous, staunchest of friends, the first to leap to his feet when the quest is announced, but somehow failing to understand its nature, taking counsel of wise men and, at the same time, excusing his inability to follow the advice he is given. And within us, too, is Galahad, chaste and pure in aspiration, following the single path to the vision of the Grail, ever tender in his relations with others, perfect in virtue, patient with the failings of his companions, and with an aura that draws all to him, inspiring each to be his best as he moves toward his goal.

*Sir Galahad - the Quest of the Holy Grail (1870)* by Arthur Hughes (1832-1915).

So, it is for each one to decide whether he will hasten his quest, seeking meaning as for the Grail of Wisdom, or whether, ignorant of his true purpose, he chooses to play about in the magic garden of Klingsor, content with the enchantments of the illusory and psychic realms. The legend of the Grail quest reminds us that we alone can save the world, and that only in saving others do we save ourselves. For the 'Heavenly Man' as the archetypal pattern, alone imparts meaningfulness to the world, or rather meaning is exhibited only through man as the self-conscious being he is meant to be. Wagner, in the finale of his magnificent retelling of the ancient legend of Parsifal, phrased it: Miracle of highest grace.

Redemption for the Redeemer. ❋

This article first appeared in *The Theosophist* in March 1981.

***Joy Mills** (October 9, 1920 - December 29, 2015), was an International Vice-President of The Theosophical Society and a National President of its American and Australian Sections. For over sixty years she was an international lecturer for the TS, having spoken in many countries. She was also a Director of the Krotona School of Theosophy, Ojai, California. She was the author of a numerous articles and books. In 2011 she was awarded the Subba Row Medal for contributions to Theosophical literature.*

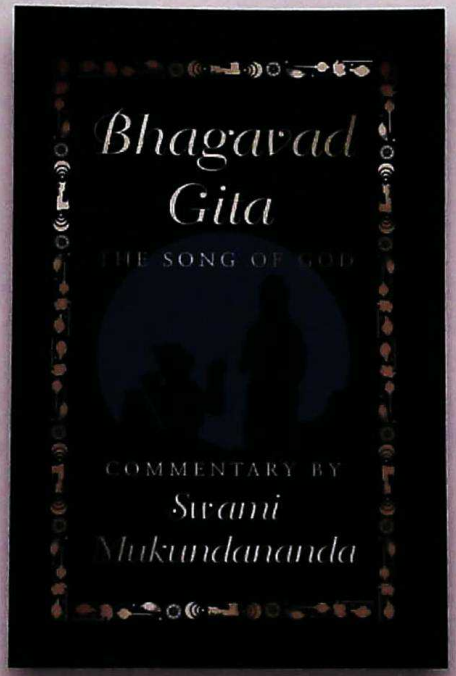
# Book Review

by **Jon M. Sweeney**

## Bhagavad Gita
## The Song of God

***by Swami Mukundananda***
*(commentary)*

A core scripture of Hinduism with an abundance of helpful commentary emphasizing its practicality.




The Bhagavad Gita has been translated and commented upon by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of religious thinkers, yogis, and poets in the modern era, including Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Nikhilananda, Stephen Mitchell and Eknath Easwaran. The text began as a poem written in Sanskrit sometime between the fifth and second centuries BCE, part of a much longer epic called *The Mahabharata*. The author is named Vyasa, which was probably not a real person.

The story told in the Bhagavad Gita is that of the prince Arjuna (in this translation, called simply Arjun), who is about to go to war, and his charioteer, Krishna, who is the personality of the Godhead. These two have a series of dialogues over 18 chapters on topics such as love of God, yoga and discipline, death and rebirth, and selflessness and courage.

This edition of the text is typical of many others in that it includes the complete original Sanskrit, followed by transliteration of the Sanskrit, then translation into English, followed by definitions of key and unusual words and concepts, and the Swami's commentary. There is much here; this book is 800 pages long.

The purpose of both the original text, and this commentary, is practical. As Swami Mukundananda explains in a thorough and helpful introduction: *"Inexperienced spiritual practitioners often separate spirituality from temporal life; some look on beatitude as something to be attained in the hereafter. But the Bhagavad Gita makes no such distinction and aims at the consecration of every aspect of human life in this world itself."*

The Swami's commentary is sometimes detailed, but that is because nearly every important theological and philosophical idea of Indian religion has a place in contemplating the Bhagavad Gita. Many of these passages will be a pleasure to ponder for people who feel a devotion to a personal God and those who are interested in philosophical questions about God's existence and meaning. For example, one commentary on chapter 9 includes this:

*"Often people say that they are only willing to believe in what they can directly perceive, and since there is no immediate perception of God, they do not believe in Him. However, the fact is that we believe in so many things in the world too, without direct perception of them. A judge delivers judgement upon a case concerning an event that took place many years in the past. If the judge adopted the philosophy of believing only what he or she had directly experienced, then the entire*

*legal system would fail."*

A commentary on chapter 18 includes these words about discipline and duty, which are frequent themes in the Bhagavad Gita:

*"Renouncing prohibited actions and unrighteous actions is proper; renouncing desire for the rewards of actions is also proper; but renouncing prescribed duties is never proper. Prescribed duties help purify the mind and elevate it from tamo guna to rajo guna to sattva guna. Abandoning them is an erroneous display of foolishness. Shree Krishna states that giving up prescribed duties in the name of renunciation is said to be in the mode of ignorance."*

Author Swami Mukundananda was born in India in 1962, and has founded ashrams and temples in India, the United States (Allen, Texas), and elsewhere around the world. He is accustomed to explaining Vedic wisdom, yoga, and holistic health to Western audiences, including at U.S. corporations and universities such as Google and Stanford. It isn't uncommon to find quotations from people such as Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein in his commentaries.

*Bhagavad Gita The Song of God*, is available at Amazon UK. Search *Swami Mukundananda* books.

# *Last Words*

And a man said: Speak to us of Self Knowledge.

And he answered, saying: Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights. But your ears thirst for the sound of your heart's knowledge. You would know in words that which you have always known in thought. You would touch with your fingers the naked body of your dreams. And it is well you should. The hidden well-spring of your soul must needs rise and run murmuring to the sea, And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes. But let there be no scales to weigh your unknown treasure, And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sounding line. For self is a sea boundless and measureless.

Say not, *"I have found the truth,"* but rather, *"I have found a truth."* Say not, *"I have found the path of the soul."* Say rather, *"I have met the soul walking upon my path."* For the soul walks upon all paths. The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed. The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.

*The Profit* - Kahlil Gibran

Reinhard Wiesinger

# About The Theosophical Society

## Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

1. ***To form a nucleus of universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.***
2. ***To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.***
3. ***To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.***

The Theosophical Society is a worldwide community whose primary Object is the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction, based on the realisation that life and all its d[illegible]man and non-human, is [illegible]

Founde[illegible] together tho[illegible] religious affil[illegible] gender or ethnic[illegible] such understanding through the study and practical application of the Ageless Wisdom of Theosophy.

The International Mission Statement of the Society is: *'To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.'*

Unity lies at the very heart of the theosophical community and inspires the lives of its members towards unselfish service and inner transformation. Divine Wisdom is One – the paths towards it are many.

The word 'Theosophy' is from Greek origin meaning Wisdom of the Gods (*theo* – of Gods; *Sophia* – wisdom). It is a word which has been used for many centuries and is also known as the Ageless Wisdom.

The Society imposes no beliefs on its members, who are united by a common search for Truth and a desire to learn the meaning and purpose of existence through study, reflection, self-responsibility and self-less service.

**It jealously guards and promotes freedom of thought and no member may impose their views on any other.**

Since *Esoterica* is available both in printed form and online please let us know if you would prefer to stop receiving the printed version, either by filling out the form below and posting to **50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA**, or contacting **office@theosoc.org.uk**

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# ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

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It is for those seeking spiritual answers to those big questions of life:

Who are we?
Where did we come from?
What's our purpose and destiny in life?

Its mission is to explore those timeless truths, occult knowledge and universal laws
which pre-date but underpin all philosophy, science and religion.
We offer thought-provoking and original interpretations
of these fascinating ideas from the perennial philosophy
to unlock the secrets of ourselves and the cosmos.

Above all, it's our intention to offer not just dry theory but, wherever possible,
practical solutions to the difficult issues which face every one of us.

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